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ESSAYS AND PHANTASIES.

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ESSAYS

AND

PHANTASIES.

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BY

JAMES THOMSON,

AUTHOR OF

"THE CITY OF DREADFUL NIGHT, AND OTHER POEMS;"
"VANE'S STORY, WEDDAH AND OM-EL-BONAIN,
AND OTHER POEMS."

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A LADY OF SORROW.

1862, 1864.

—o—

INTRODUCTORY NOTE.

ABOUT three years before his death I received from my friend Vane certain manuscripts with the somewhat fierce *Envoy*:—

> From the midst of the fire I fling
> These arrows of fire to you:
> If they sing, and burn, and sting,
> You feel how I burn too;
> But if they reach you there
> Speed-spent, charred black and cold,
> The fire burns out in the air,
> The Passion will not be told.

From these papers I have selected and now edit the following piece, which embodies the ideas then supreme in his mind with relation to the question of the immortality of the human soul. He was at that time wont to declare that he believed in the soul's immortality as a Materialist believes in the immortality of matter: he believed that the universal soul subsists for ever, just as a Materialist believes that uni-

versal matter subsists for ever, without increase or decrease, growth or decay; he no more believed in the immortality of any particular soul than the Materialist believes in the immortality of any particular body. The one substance is eternal, the various forms are ever varying.

That this composition is true in relation to the author, that it is genuine, I have no doubt; for the poor fellow had large gifts for being unhappy. But is it true in relation to the world and general life? I think true, but not the whole truth. There is truth of winter and black night, there is truth of summer and dazzling noonday. On the one side of the great medal are stamped the glory and triumph of life, on the other side are stamped the glory and triumph of death; but which is the obverse and which the reverse none of us surely knows. It is certain that both are inseparably united in every coin doled out to us from the universal mintage. The night-side of nature has been the theme of literature more often than the day-side, simply because literature, as a rule, is the refuge of the miserable; I mean genuine, thoughtful, and earnest literature; literature as an end in and for itself, not merely as a weapon to fight with, a ware to sell, a luxury to enjoy. The happy seldom write for writing's sake; they are fully employed in living. "Were a God asked to recite his life, he would do so in two words," is a grand truth in *Le Centaure* of Maurice de Guérin. For health is simple, always one and the same, while the forms and variations of disease are innumerable and complex.

> He lives full life who never thinks of life;
> He is half dead who ponders life and death.

Mystery is but misery dissolved in thought, the intolerable concrete rendered abstract and vague.

The triune Lady of Sorrow must have derived from De Quincey, whose influence is obvious in other respects. But why did the author take such a roundabout way of expressing his ideas? Some men see truth and express truth best in imagery and symbol, others in syllogism and formula. Both modes are good done well, both bad done ill. And they are constitutional. The artist will adhere to his pencil, the anatomist to his scalpel, remonstrate and exhort we ever so much.

PART I.—THE ANGEL.

"Come as thou cam'st a thousand times,
A visitant from radiant climes,
And smooth my hair and kiss my brow,
And ask: My love, why sufferest thou?"

"Come down for a moment, O come! come serious and mild
And pale, as thou wert on this earth, thou adorable child!
Or come as thou art, with thy sanctitude, triumph and bliss
For a garment of glory about thee; and give me one kiss,
One tender and pitying look of those pure loving eyes,
One word of solemn assurance and truth that the soul with its love never dies!"

I LIVED in London, and alone. For although I had many work-fellow acquaintances, and of these a few were very friendly, I had no intimate relatives near me and no bosom friend. No bosom friend, were it not one whom I scarcely knew whether to call friend or enemy; she who came suddenly (though indeed her advent had been long before announced) in the brilliant morning of a joyous summer holiday, to dwell with me and possess me; permitting no rivals nor any approach to rivalry, absorbing every thought and feeling to her devotion, and compelling even the dreams and visions of both day and night to worship her; the darkly beautiful Queen, the disinherited Titaness, the Pythia of an abandoned and ruined shrine, the wild, passionate, tender-hearted, desolate, sorcery-smitten Sorceress; Sorrow, the daughter of Love and Death. I call her queen, for queen in truth at first she was, royal as Persephone herself, and not one of the many ladies of her court. For Death is

a great rival, magnanimous in the instant of his cruelest triumph; sending ever to companion those whom he has bereaved of their darlings no menial, but this his own beloved daughter. She is mournful, she is desolate, she is stern, she is often insane; in her queenliest beauty she is terrible, "as an army with banners" defeated, as a noonday in eclipse; but she is always great-hearted, always high-minded: pique, malice, querulousness, perversity, and all the meaner emotions of loss, are far beneath *her*. And now with her I was to live alone; in the heart of London, yet mysteriously alone with her who is "Grief wound up to a mysteriousness." She annihilated from me the huge city and all its inhabitants; they, with their thoughts, passions, labours, struggles, victories, defeats, were nothing to me; I was nothing to them. As I passed daily through the streets, my eyes must have pictured the buildings and the people, my ears must have vibrated to the roar of the vehicles; but my inward vision was fixed the while on her, my inward ear was attentive to her voice alone. Scarcely at night, when I went up with her to the solitude of my room, or wandered with her through deserted thoroughfares and environs, were we more perfectly alone than amidst the noise and glare of the populous day. Indeed we were often by day the most inviolably alone, when the besieging armies of the perceptions of the outward world had driven us to take refuge in the far security of the innermost citadel of my soul. She annihilated so utterly from me the mighty metropolis, whose citizens are counted by millions, that the whole did not even form a dark background for the spiritual scenes and personages her spells continually evoked.

She is a mighty enchantress, herself the victim of enchantments mightier than her own; and, in obedience to subtle inward impulses, or perhaps to imperious agencies from without, which she can neither resist nor control, is perpetually

suffering transformation. Usually, vague and slight changes affect her every moment, decided and obvious changes—in form, and feature, and expression—almost every hour. These I attempt not to describe; as who, for instance, would attempt to describe the momentary or even the hourly changes affecting any landscape in the course of one diurnal revolution of the earth? But as we speak of morning and noon and evening in the day; of the four seasons in the year; of childhood, youth, maturity, and old age in life; of a few tones and semitones in sound, and a few colours in the reflection of light; among the infinitely fine gradations of all seizing certain points definitively different even to perceptions and judgments so gross as are ours; so I, from her multitudinous and still evolving variations, catch at three which are conspicuously distinct and representative, and try to give them expression.

I speak not of her, I cannot speak of her, as she came at first; when my spirit was stunned and lay as dead in the body mechanically alive; lay in swoon with but the dimmest consciousness of her presence, sitting down black-veiled beside me many days and nights, speaking not a word, as the friends of Job sat silent at first, for they saw that his grief was very great.

In the next period of our intimacy, when I was again aroused, there was but one phase of her being to which she could be constant for hours together, to which she persistently recurred day after day, week after week, month after month; and that phase was the most sublime and beautiful in the whole series of her metamorphoses; it was her Transfiguration.

When she blessed me by assuming this glorious mask, whether by day or night, whether in storm or calm, whether in solitude or amidst many people, instantly I beheld deep midnight tranced in perfect summer peace; the full moon

was shining, the heavens were crowded with stars : we were alone. And always the earth was at least so far away under us that I saw it, when I saw it at all, with catholic vision comprehending in one glance a vast concave of mountains, woods, fields, cities and rivers and seas. Yet she, my companion, was by no means new or strange to me in this new and strange relation, nor would she have appeared strange to many thousands now alive. For she was simply the image in beatitude of her who died so young. The pure girl was become the angel ; the sheathed wings had unfolded in the favourable clime, the vesture was radiantly white with the whiteness of her soul, the long hair was a dazzling golden glory round the ever-young head, the blue eyes had absorbed celestial light in the cloudless empyrean : but still, thus developed and beatified, she was only the more intensely and supremely herself ; more perfectly revealed to me, more intimately known and more passionately loved by me, than when she had walked the earth in the guise of a mortal. She would take me by the hand, sometimes impressing a kiss, which was an ample anodyne, upon my world-weary brow, and lead me away floating calmly through the infinite highth and depth and breadth, from galaxy to galaxy, from silver star to star. We ever floated in still peace, our flight never stirring against itself a rush of the surrounding æther ; yet I could remark how swiftly worlds strewn broad behind us gathered themselves into constellations, and constellations crowded before us dispersed into unrelated stars. Our approach never divested the worlds of their pure spheric beauty, never discovered them rugged with mountains, blotted with storms, varicoloured with day and night, and land and sea ; they remained always to us bright throbbing stars, that grew in size and glory as we neared them. Choirs of bright seraphs floated vague in their ambient brightness. And though the

life-roar of their mortal or immortal habitants was unheard by us, they ever rolled enveloped with music which was divine. And as we thus wandered, like two children, sister and brother, straying in delight solemnised by awe through the palace and the measureless domains of Our Father, our beings were ever in most intimate communion. Our lips scarcely moved, our hands never gestured save in startled rapture, our eyes rarely expressed aught save reverence and gratitude and love of Him and to Him through whose realms we were thus enfranchised to wander as in our own heritage; yet spirit into spirit, and specially (as I felt) her spirit into mine, poured itself fully without any material or symbolic medium: then first was I taught beyond all after forgetting that there is a perfect interfusion of soul with soul, when the pure fire of love has utterly consumed matter and space and time.

With what, then, was my spirit overfilled from hers? With love too infinite for language, faith too solemn for the world, hope too glorious for mortality. I who have fallen and still grovel in the dust, with wine-lees clotting my garments and wild-rose thorns tormenting my brow, how should *I* dare to usurp the office of expounding the mysteries of holiness and love? I have forgotten the wordless language she spake; I remember only that I would have listened for ever. I cannot recall the music's tune; I am only certain that it ravished my soul. I cannot even, alas! retrace her features and form; I know only that her beauty was divine. One sentence of that language I seem to remember; then it meant eternal union, now it interprets into everlasting farewell. One cadence of that music I seem to recall; then it chanted, *Gloria in excelsis Deo*, now it knells a *De Profundis*. One spark of that radiant beauty seems still to burn within me; then it lamped my spirit as a star of heaven, now it tortures me with fire of hell. For she revealed to

me (if in this, also, I do not dream, as mainly in my life I have dreamed) that she was resting in a sphere divine and tranquil; she and many, many others who, like her, could not continue their infinite ascension until rejoined by the twin-souls left beneath them on earth, and who also like her were permitted to visit their twin-souls with heavenly consolations until death's consummate beatitude should remove all need and possibility of consolation. The sphere was so glorious that in its light and heat all their earth-stains were washed and consumed away, and so inviolably calm that in its constant perfect summer their souls developed all the potential beauty and virtue of this life-phase—as in our brief and troubled earthly summer one generation of roses outbloom to their prime, then the rose-tree endures patiently through the winter and the spring, growing strong and broad for a richer efflorescence when the succeeding summer arrives. Their lives were praise and thanksgiving to God, intercommunion of the holy mysteries of love, and angelic visits to the dear ones bereaved of their mortal presence. And therefore, month by month and year by year, until also released by beneficent death from the prison-house of this lower world, I was to grow wiser, purer, braver, in faith and hope and love, unto the Supreme Sacrament of our union in Heaven.

> Fratelli, a un tempo stesso, Amore e Morte
> Ingenerò la sorte.
> Cose quaggiù sì belle
> Altre il mondo non ha, non han le stelle.

II.—THE SIREN.

" All the wide world beside us
Show like multitudinous
Puppets passing from a scene:
What but mockery can they mean
Where *I am*—where *thou hast been?*"

" Draining the wine of that voluptuous sin,
Which heaven and earth seem both well lost to win."

THE earth's time passed over me unperceived, unregarded; but the true time, which is change, wrought within me. The natural world refused to be wholly shut out; and its countless objects, besieging persistently the gateways of the senses, began gradually to penetrate into my soul. But still I perceived them merely as phantasmagoria, fleeting bubbles and cloud-shadows on the hurrying river of time. The unutterable want, wretchedness, ignorance, folly, the unfathomable crime and sin of the awful metropolis would have intolerably crushed my spirit with the oppression of their substantial reality—my spirit already faint to the verge of death in its own dearth of love-sustenance; but the fever of its famine transmuted them all, with the shapes in which they were embodied, into fantastic delirious dreams. The world was a great theatre; life but a carnival masquerade and drama, with irony for the secret of its plot; the passions were all mimetic, none of the personages were what they appeared, all was illusion and mockery. And the irony culminated in the grand fact that the masquers went about their masquerading, the actors went through their parts,

soberly, seriously, and often with tragic earnestness; not one in ten thousand being permitted to suspect that he and all his fellows were indeed only playing mad mime-tricks for the inextinguishable laughter of that supreme Fate, beneath whom in secret they cowered with awe and terror; beholding deep down in the dark abysses of contemplation an enormous stone idol, dumb, blind, dead, pitiless, passionless, eternal; and beside it the laws of doom and destiny graven on tables of stone; as if the God and His ordinances had been petrified into immutability in the instant of cosmic creation.

Such was the enchantment now wrought upon me by my spell-bound Enchantress. For she was always with me, though she assumed now rarely, and ever more rarely until never, the holy guise of an angel. When fresh from the consecration of bereavement, I was found worthy to be comforted with angelic communion; but as in the course of time the virtue of that consecration from without was exhausted, while yet I had not by its blessing attained inward self-consecration, my ignoble heart found ignobler companionship. When the mouthful of Eucharistic wine inspires us no more, we may gulp down the wine of the tavern; when the temple-incense is mystical no more, we may drug ourselves with opium and hasheesh. Thus Sorrow, my intimate, now chiefly swayed me in her character of Siren. And this Siren Sorrow was the saddest I have ever known; for she affected—nay, frantically endeavoured—to renounce, to defy, to ignore her own essential sorrowfulness, expressing a wine of mad intoxication from the berries of her deadly nightshade.

In the workshop, in the streets, in my room, she would suddenly gesture to me with gesture imperiously alluring; and instantly we were away, down, down, down, through serene solitudes of water. Sometimes the sun was burning

in the far heavens, sometimes it was moonless and starless night; generally the season was of fervid summer, and a drowsy dreamy warmth and tempered unsparkling light pervaded the abysses wherein we wandered; the hour and the season being seldom the same as those of the world whence we fled. And there were occasions when it was polar winter; when the moon shone sharp, bitter, naked, like an intense icy crystal, radiating positive arrowy cold as the sun radiates heat; when the waters cut my limbs like steel, and the stars glittered down barbed and piercing frost-points, and the sky hung like a petrified sea or the stony vault of a sepulchral world. She would lead me adown the beds of great rivers and over the desert floors of the ocean, amidst the unstartled shoals of their strange inhabitants, amidst the wrecks and remnants of ships and the drowned crews of ships. Ever and anon, at the suggestions of a wild caprice, she broke out into fragmentary singing, terrible yet sweet, magical with weird phantasy and mocking mirth. But two or three times she abandoned herself to a melody of such overwhelming sorrow and desolate despair, that I knew Love, her mother, was dying.

In the vast sea-crystal above us she would make flit before me in carnival processions all the scenes and peoples of the upper earth, flinging jeers of gesture and voice, irony, sarcasm, scornful pity, irresistible laughter, against them as they went by. The churches dwindled before her into whitened sepulchres, the palaces were seen as dungeons populous with vermin; she showed the fire raging under the earth's thin vesture of green grass broidered with flowers, and the skeleton padded with raw flesh beneath the skin of the beautiful; her finger-point seared the hidden folly of the wise and the secret terror of the brave; her glance transfixed the foul lust in the lover, and the core of sublimated selfishness in the holy ones; all the noble and mighty and

reverend of the kingdoms she transformed into gibbering apes. She laughed back the world into chaos.

Then she would lead me into labyrinthic caverns, shut in from the waters with marble doors, tapestried with mossy growths and long slender sea-blooms purple and crimson and amber; floored with golden sand and iridescent shells, walled with emerald, roofed with crystal, lit with gleaming pearls and flashing precious stones. In the innermost chambers couches of soft and fragrant weeds were strewn around low tables of coral and jasper, on which were heaped sumptuous banquets. When King Harald first touched the hand of the Lapland witch-girl Snæfrid, "immediately it was as if a hot fire ran through his body;" and this same hot fire ran through me as we reclined to the banquet. Then the walls waved like green waters, the sands quivered as through flowing streams, the gems shot out fiery sparkles, the cavern-chamber was all athrob and full of murmurous sounds like the throbbing and the murmuring of the sea. She clothed herself with a fiercer beauty, haughty, passionate, intoxicating, irresistible. Lithe as a panther, she arose and moved restlessly; her green hair wreathed in snaky fascinations, her eyes burned with humid fires, her moods varied incalculably. From beakers that perchance were the spoils of imperial argosies sea-entombed for millenniums, she poured forth wines more imperial, fragrant as morning, glowing as sunset, fervent as noontide. Her restless movements harmonised into miraculous dancing, in the pauses and whirls of which her voice rang forth a music growing wilder and ever wilder, the phantasy more astounding, the melody more ravishing, the mirth more riant, the mockery more terrible, the passion more overwhelming; until drunken, dazed, electrified, frenzied, I reciprocated upon her the spell; and we two masquers in the universal carnival,

the maddest and most lawless in a world all mad and lawless, revelled for a while with triumphant delirium in the recesses of our ocean-guarded solitude.

The Siren, even more terrible than beautiful! From the voluptuous swoon I started suddenly and lo! the feast was vanished; the coral and emerald and jasper were no more, the wine was black blood, and its jewelled golden beakers were human skulls; the gleaming sand was a loathsome slime whereon and wherein crawled shapes of clammy hideousness. Then amorphous monsters of the unfathomed sea came heaving in by thousands, by myriads; and the flat was a Golgotha of human bones, the bones of men and women and children devoured by the insatiate sea; with inexpressible loathing and agony, I was compelled to "see things that ought not to be seen, sights that are abominable, and secrets that are unutterable." And worst of all, the most beautiful was become the most hideous, the Siren was a foul wrinkled hag, who kissed me with intolerable kisses, and pointed out bone by bone the huddled wrecks of my kind, and embraced me with her withered arms, as if taking me into everlasting possession; so that the conviction was seared into me, that I, though still breathing, was drowned as utterly as the skeletons, separated for ever to this death-in-life by the whole impassable ocean-firmament, from God in heaven and from man on earth. And when I wrenched myself loose and fled away, not with any definite hope, but simply rapt by an ecstasy of abhorrence, she pursued me with her train of hungry monsters, and clung to me with mocking endearments; and I again escaped, again to be pursued and overtaken; and so again and again; and hours were prolonged into immeasurable ages; and thoughts of horror and feelings of putrefaction crawled writhing in my brain and heart like the swarm-

ing of palpable worms; while weary with an unimaginable weariness I implored and imprecated rest, unconsciousness, annihilation; until at length, exhausted, sick, trembling, I awoke into the blessed natural world and found myself once more a man among men, and vowed—alas, how vainly!—never to harbour *her* more.

III.—THE SHADOW.

"Yes, dark, dark is my secret bower,
And lown the midnicht may be;
For there is none waking in a' this tower,
But you my truelove and me."

"The dead are sleeping in their sepulchres;
And mouldering as they sleep: a thrilling sound,
Half sense, half thought, among the darkness stirs,
Breathed from their wormy beds all living things around;
And mingling with the still night and mute sky
Its awful hush is felt inaudibly."

"Victors or vanquished from the fearful strife,
What matters?—Ah, within our Mother's breast,
From toil and tumult, sin and sorrow free,
Sphered beyond hope and dread, divinely calm,
They lie all gathered into perfect rest:
And o'er the trance of their Eternity
The cypress waves, more holy than the palm."

STILL the earth's time passed over me, unperceived, unregarded: but the true time, which is change, wrought within me. Besieging persistently the gateways of my senses, gradually the whole outer world—the innumerable armies of woes, sins, fears, despairs,—the dreadful legions of all the realities—poured in upon and overwhelmed my spirit. The earth was become massy, substantial, intolerably oppressive, a waking Nightmare; its inhabitants were no shadows; their lives were woven into no fantastic mime, but into a vast tragedy ruthlessly real; their passions were how far from merely scenic! With awe and secret shuddering terror, I felt crushing me down the omnipotence of Fate; Fate the

Sphynx in the desert of Life, whose enigma is destruction to all who cannot interpret, and a doom more horrible before destruction to him who does interpret; Fate which weaves lives only too real in the loom of destiny so mysterious, uncompassionate of their agonies in the process; Fate, God petrified; the dumb, blind, soulless deification of Matter. And still I felt myself no nearer to a union of sympathy and common thought with my fellow-men.

And I wandered about the City, the vast Metropolis which was become as a vast Necropolis, desolate as a Pariah; burdened in all places and at all times with the vision of wrath and hatred that might dye the green earth blood-red, lust that might pollute all the seas, ignorance and guilt and despair that might shroud the noonday sun with eclipse. Desolate indeed I was, although ever and anon, here and there, in wan haggard faces, in wrinkled brows, in thin compressed lips, in drooping frames, in tremulous gestures, in glassy hopeless eyes, I detected the tokens of brotherhood, I recognised my brethren in the great Freemasonry of Sorrow. And she, the sombre patroness of our unassociative fraternity, the veiled goddess of our lonely midnight mysteries, the dreadful Baphomet in whose worship we all alike perished,—she never left me; nay, if so it could be, she interwrought herself yet more completely with my being. Never more an Angel, seldom more a Siren; but now a formless Shadow, pervading my soul as the darkness of night pervades the air. I do well to write *now*, for still she is with me, and still this is her dominant metamorphosis; and whether it will be the last, lasting until death, or will have successor or successors, I cannot pretend to judge. But as she is now thus with me—be it for ever, be it only for a time—I will speak of the Shadow in the present tense. Ah, how well I know her! yet my affection toward her I cannot define: it may be awe, fear, love, distrust, almost hate and contempt;

but whichever of these, or whatsoever strange compound of them, it is of mystical potency, and I am thoroughly the slave of her enchantments.

At first she used to lead me, and still she often leads me, hour after hour of dusk and night through the interminable streets of this great and terrible city. The ever-streaming multitudes of men and women and children, mysterious fellow-creatures of whom I know only that they *are* my fellow-creatures—and even this knowledge is sometimes darkened and dubious—overtake and pass me, meet and pass me; the inexhaustible processions of vehicles rattle and roar in the midst; lamp beyond lamp and far clusters of lamps burn yellow above the paler cross shimmer from brilliant shops, or funereally measure the long vistas of still streets, or portentously surround the black gulphs of squares and graveyards silent; lofty churches uplift themselves, blank, soulless, sepulchral, the pyramids of this mournful desert, each conserving the Mummy of a Great King in its heart; the sky overhead lowers vague and obscure; the moon and stars when visible shine with alien coldness, or are as wan earthly spectres, not radiant rejoicing spheres whose home is in the heavens beyond the firmament. The continuous thunders, swelling, subsiding, resurgent, the innumerable processions, confound and overwhelm my spirit, until as of old I cannot believe myself walking awake in a substantial city amongst real persons. Then she, the Shadow, interweaves herself more wonderfully about me and within me; so that seeing I may see not and hearing I may hear not, so that not seeing I may see and not hearing I may hear. As my eyes fix and dilate into vision more entranced of the supreme and awful mystery, the browbrain upon my eyes expands and protends into a vast shadowy theatre for processions more multitudinous and solemn. The lamps withdraw and ascend, and become wayward meteors

of the night; the night itself grows very dark, yet wherever I gaze I can discern, seeing by darkness as commonly we see by light; the houses recede and swell into black rock-walls and shapeless mounds of gloom; the long street is a broad road levelled forthright from world's end to world's end. All of human kind that have ever lived, with all that are now living and all that are being born into life, all the members of the æon of humanity, compose the solemn procession. Far, far in advance gleam stately figures in ample Oriental robes, "dusk faces with white silken turbans wreathed," from whose midst sway the long necks of high-backed camels; then follow mediæval knights on noble horses splendidly caparisoned; kings dark-bearded and queens most lovely trailing brilliant retinues; hooded monks in sombre gowns; barbarians fantastically arrayed or unarrayed, the limbs and features weirdly tattooed; nomad tribes moving with their flocks as they move in the deserts of Central Asia; legions on legions countless of all history's soldiery, from the heroes who fought around Troy to the warriors of Waterloo; the chariots and the spoils of a Capitolian triumph; "elephants endorsed with towers;" the silent flash of Mænads who run as they ran upon the Thracian mountains; dim crowds in the garb of our own time and country: and, as upon an unseen river flowing down the mid-stream of the swollen river of the peoples, glide forward galleys and galleons and ships of all seas and centuries: all come sweeping by, thronged and intermingled yet unconfused, in ghostly silence; and their trampling does not shake the earth beneath their feet: not more silent is the procession of the stars. I introvert my vision yet more intensely, and see the great flood far, far behind, emerging from the underworld, heaving up steadily wave on wave, each billow a mass of countless human lives, dark against the background of a serenest golden dawn. Oh, what an affluent dayspring!

how it floods there the world with light! But where I stand reviewing the spectral march—so incalculable is the length of the procession—it is not daybreak, it is not morning; the noontide may be thousands of leagues remote, the twilight and the evening are immemorially overpassed; it is deep perfect night. Where I stand, absorbed, astonied, dismayed, overwhelmed, the legions are traversing a vast desert moorland, above which hover gross yellow meteors, upon which swell endless ranges of rock-wall and immense gloomy mounds, athwart which the broad road protends straight and level from world's end to world's end.

I have said that there is no sound or stir from the multitudinous trampling; but is there no music at all to time the spectral march? Music there is, or the vague echo of music from some sphere remote; music like the rhythm of a tide beating upon far-off shores; music which now interprets into that Dead March heard by Handel, full of pomp and majestic lamentation; now into that Dead March to which Beethoven listened, with its fitful bursts of desolate keening; now into that Russian Hymn March of Life-in-Death, with its sublimity of yearning pathos: such and so vague is the music to which the armies march. But are the symphonies all orchestral? is there no vocal psalm or anthem, no pæan or dirge articulate? One anthem there is, though I had again and again watched the multitudes defile as it seemed through the hours of many ages, before I apprehended its language. But at length, suddenly, on an autumn night very dark and still, in an huddled dimness of sad autumn night, it was given me both to see and to hear. Right opposite to where I stood, a league beyond the farther bank of the silent everflowing river of the peoples, towered a vast black shape dwarfing the Cyclopean rock-wall behind it; an image colossal, like to that which the king of Babylon set up in the plain of Dura, that all men might

bow down and worship it; a colossal image of black marble, the Image and the concentration of the whole blackness of Night, as of a Woman seated, veiled from head to foot; and the ranks as they pass it bow down all with one impulse, like ranks of corn before a steady blowing wind. And from where this statue sits throned, a voice of innumerable voices, like the voice of a sea which is the voice of innumerable waves, or rather like the voice of a forest in calm which is the murmur of innumerable leaves, but dim and faint to extremity, is for ever intoning with unwearied monotony of recurrence certain simple childish words, a chant such as may be sadly chanted among dusky aboriginal tribes:—

"All must move to live, and their moving
Moves on and on to Death;
Wherever they pause in their moving,
There awaiteth them Death;
Let them move as they will, their moving
Soon brings them unto Death;
Let them move where they will, their moving
So surely leads to Death:
All Life's continual moving
Moveth only for Death."

No other chant than this have I ever heard while watching the procession. No war-song from the soldiery, no psalm from the monks, no love-lay from the gallant knights; and never has the faintest whisper reached me from the newly-emerged pilgrims whose background is the golden dawn,—the daybeams which struck music from the marble Memnon thrill no sounding chords in these. A vague pulsing of slow march-music full of the solemn sadness of death, a vague breathing of choral singing full of the sombre triumph of death; save for these, unearthly silence while the infinite march sweeps on.

Whence do the countless armies emerge? From the

unknown chasm between the earth and the golden dawn. Where do they march? Along the broad road level through a vast wilderness of rock-strewn billowy moorland, above which hover vaporous yellow meteors. Whither do they immerge? Into the unknown chasm between the earth and the illimitable black night. Into an unknown chasm which may be a sea, for the rhythm of the vague march-music is like the rhythm of waters moaning upon the far, far forward shore. The broad road sweeps straight to this chasm, but also detaches narrow defiles and tortuous ravines thereto. And a bewildering mist as well as the great darkness broods over the horizon; and the moon there hangs spectral and beamless, and the stars there are as unclosed eyes of the dead.

Into that chasm all immerge. But do not all or some re-emerge on the side of the golden dawn? The dull meteor-gleams on the misty gloom unshroud none of its secrets, are altogether ineffectual save for half-revealing weird suggestions of ghostly imagery in the mist itself; and the moon hangs spectral and beamless, and the stars are blind as the unshut eyes of the dead. The chasm may be a bottomless void, or a desert ocean without farther shore, or a sea whereon hidden barks await the pilgrims, or a narrow Lethe-stream. Singly or by thousands they plunge; none is from the hither side ever seen again; no voice or sound is ever heard from them after the plunging. And not all the torches and lamps of the earth gathered together, not the sun and the moon and the stars of heaven conjoined into one glory, not the whole world itself burning in clear conflagration, could light up and disinter the secrets of that aboriginal gloom.

But often when I have been gazing through timeless hours upon the innumerable legions marching, marching, marching, in unintermitted march, to the rhythm of a far-

booming tide; bowing down with one impulse before the colossal Image, which is as the concentration of the whole blackness of Night, to the monotonous breathing of a slow sad wind; disappearing into the black mist-shrouded gulph, while ever-new multitudes appeared emergent on the background of the golden dawn; often then have I pondered:—Are not these who now ascend the same who there descended? Is not the appearance a reappearance? May not the whole circle be fulfilled in the under world; above here in the day a march from dawn to dark, below there in the night a march through dark to dawn? Are not the innumerable multitudes now visible, together with equal multitudes now invisible, adequate for the continuous, never-pausing procession, without constant destruction and constant creation? If the sun which arises in the east is the same sun that set in the west; if the moon which is seen crescent is the same moon that dwindled down from the full until, for a time, her place in heaven was void; if the armies of the stars which circle the heavens are ever almost all the same stars; if the populations which arouse in the morning are, with very few exceptions, those that sank to sleep at night;—are not also these legions of human beings phantasmal, these millions on millions numberless commencing their march, the same who aforetime, and, perchance, many hundreds of times, traversed the earth-wilderness and disappeared?

And then She, the Shadow, beholding me that I am utterly aweary and forworn with the burthen of the vigil and the vision she has imposed, will murmur to me ere she suffers me to sleep—"Peradventure the new are also the old, but never shall any mortal be sure. The resources of Nature are infinite; the mysteries of Destiny are eternally unrevealed. It is as easy to bring forth new as to reproduce the old, and the thrift of the universe may be human

lavishness and waste. Stars fall through the night; the affluent heavens are not careful of their stars. Every prodigal æon squanders broadcast myriads of its lives, and the hours of every cycle are squandered by myriads; yet not one monad, not one moment, to the universe has ever been lost. Know this only, that you can never know; of this only be assured, that you shall never be assured; doubt not that you must doubt to the end—if ever end there be. . . . But hearken yet again to the iterations and reiterations of the triumphant threnody, streaming evermore from where the veiled Image is enthroned: to that lulling you also shall soon sink in sleep, O my poor, desolate, weary child!"

"All must move to live, and their moving
Moves on and on to Death;
Wherever they pause in their moving,
There awaiteth them Death;
Let them move as they will, their moving
Soon brings them unto Death;
Let them move where they will, their moving
So surely leads to Death:
All Life's continual moving
Moveth only for Death."

So I knew her chiefly at first, but thus I chiefly know her now. In the workshop, in the streets, in my own room, she suddenly envelopes me; and forthwith, be it day or night with the outer world, it is for me dense night, moonless and starless, infinite, amorphous, solitary, silent. I have said that she pervades my soul as night's darkness fills the air; yet also I am conscious of her projected by my side, a vague womanly shadow, as it were the dark sun whence is radiated the darkness. We float not through the ethereal abysses, we glide not to the floors of the sea; we wander slowly yet unobstructed a little beneath the surface

of the earth, passing as only spirits and spectral shades can pass through the solid ground. The Angel spake not with sounding speech—her soul immediately informed mine; the Siren articulated no earthly language—pure melody sufficed her for consummate enthralling expression; but the Shadow speaks to me in a terrene tongue, though in unworldly tones. Her words are the words of men and nature, but her voice is preterhuman and preternatural; murmurous, yet thin, never hurried, scarcely modulated, as it were the phantom of a living voice; and it gives to her simplest words weird significance. She leads me just beneath the surface of the earth, through sepulchral vaults, catacombs, cemeteries, graveyards, through the confusion of cities buried by time and sea and earthquake and volcanic bombardment, through all mortuary relics from the primæval fossil to the corpse inhumed yesterday. And ever as we wander she murmurs to me; and I have long since discovered that much of the dust wherewith she is cloudily enveloped, and which tempers to my spiritual vision the intensity of her innate gloom, has been gathered from mouldered and mouldering libraries. Solemn and even appalling is her low thin voice in the utter obscurity and silence, in the untravelled labyrinthic vastitude of these "camps and cities of the ancient dead."—"Cycle after cycle hath given me countless votaries," she murmurs; "age after age hath added liberally to my empire; year by year the world with its children bows to the sway of Oblivion. All must move to live, and their moving moves on and on to death; all life's continual moving moveth only for death. For Love, my own mother, is she not long since dead? But my father, who is Death himself, still exists, and shall exist for æons beyond number before he sinks exhausted, for lack of prey, upon my bosom, and is shrouded and sepulchred for ever with all the already sepulchred world by my loving hands. Until

then, I to him—who is now my sole parent—and he to me—his eldest and dearest and mightiest daughter—must we be mutually devoted. . . . Surely all things by their nature, and all thoughtful beings by their nature and their reason, join with him who in his epitaph '*implora pace.*'"

Sometimes in speaking of this her dead mother, but never on any subject else, she loses her wonderful calmness, and expresses herself with a wild lyrical fervour of passion; her voice grows hurried and agitated, and swells sealike with the ominous mutter and roar of echoes from other worlds, and rings with every resonant note, and thrills with every modulation of love and grief and despair; and she herself, the Shadow, is swollen and agitated tempestuously, and lurid lightning-flashes leap from the heart of her gloom. But now only at long intervals and for briefest periods is she swayed by this impassioned mood.

Commonly after some short prelude she commences what I may call the rites of her self-worship. The liturgy and the hymns are from men, the homily is her own. As for her theme, it is in fact always the same, one which includes all themes possible to man; a subject by us variously named as it is contemplated in various relations and moods, and which she with her mystic insight seems to call indifferently by any one or more of the names we have thus bestowed—World, Life, Birth, Death, Time, Eternity, Oblivion, Cosmos, Chaos, Heaven, Hell, Matter, Spirit, Happiness, Misery, Health, Disease, Growth, Decay, Vanity, Reality, Illusion, Truth, God, Fate, All, Nothing; for under all these titles she sees the sole Substance itself always essentially one and the same, "itself by itself, solely, one everlastingly, and single." But as one of these names is supreme in the poetry of solemn suggestiveness, is itself for us mortals (who are dazed from clear vision of *Life*) the profoundest poem ever written, and is very grand in our English mother-

tongue, I choose this name to entitle her theme, and say that the text of all her homilies is *Death.*

But before the sermon and during its intermissions come the reading and the chanting. And for reading, besides all human scriptures, she has two mighty Books of Chronicles; the one azure and black-purple leaved, with white and golden and crimson illustrations, the commas and period-points in whose vast-flowing sentences are planets and comets and suns; the other an autobiography in this Universal History, wherein the generations of the earth have written down their own lives, so that every stratum-leaf holds the fragmentary archives of an æon of innumerable thousands of years. Volumes too vast for piecemeal citation or epitome, even if one had conquered their lore. But a few of the briefer human anthem-words and collects which she adopts in her burial service for all death—adopts for the sake of me, her human auditor—a very few of these I will cite; for these mournful echoes from hearts vacant of all hope, these *suspiria de profundis* of world-weary spirits, these perpetual moans and murmurs of the restless waters of Time beating against the barren shores of the World, ever exercise upon me a strangely powerful fascination. They sigh forth timid and tremulous, they leap forth like swift arrows of fire piercing and burning with passionate anguish, from hearts that have mouldered for centuries, from hearts that have not yet reached the grave toward which they yearn. Hush! for her voice is very faint and low and slender, as she chants and recites these melancholy spells.

"And deth, allas! ne wil not have my lif,
Thus walk I lik a resteless caytif,
And on the ground, which is my modres gate,
I knokke with my staf, erly and late,
And saye, 'Leeve moder, let me in.
Lo, how I wane, fleisch, and blood, and skyn.

Allas! whan schuln my boones ben at rest?
Moder with yow wil I chaunge my chest,
That in my chamber longe tyme hath be,
Ye, for an haine clout to wrap in me.'
But yet to me sche wol not do that grace,
For which ful pale and welkid is my face."

"He there does now enjoy eternal rest,
And happy ease, which thou dost want and crave,
And farther from it daily wanderest.
What if some little pain the passage have,
Which makes frail flesh to fear the bitter wave?
Is not short pain well borne that brings long ease,
And lays the soul to sleep in quiet grave?
Sleep after toil, port after stormy seas,
Ease after war, death after life, does greatly please."

"To-morrow, and to-morrow, and to-morrow,
Creeps in this petty pace from day to day,
To the last syllable of recorded time:
And all our yesterdays have lighted fools
The way to dusty death. Out, out, brief candle!
Life's but a walking shadow; a poor player
That struts and frets his hour upon the stage,
And then is heard no more: it is a tale
Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury,
Signifying nothing."

"We are such stuff
As dreams are made of, and our little life
Is rounded by a sleep."

"Nothing is heard,
Nor nothing is, but all oblivion,
Dust, and an endless darkness."

"Come ye! who still the cumbrous load of life
Push hard up hill; but as the farthest steep
You trust to gain, and put an end to strife,
Down thunders back the stone with mighty sweep,
And hurls your labours to the valley deep,
For ever vain; come, and withouten fee,
I in oblivion will your sorrows steep,
Your cares, your toils; will steep you in a sea
Of full delight; O come, ye weary wights! to me."

"Were I quiet earth,
That were no evil: would I ne'er had been
Aught else but dust!"

"Hasten to the bridal bed—
Underneath the grave 'tis spread;
In darkness shall our love be hid,
Oblivion be our coverlid:
We may rest and none forbid."

"Quick and dark
The grave is yawning: as its roof shall cover
My limbs with dust and worms under and over,
So let oblivion hide my grief. . . . The air
Closes upon my accents, as despair
Upon my heart:—let death upon my care!"

"Fade far away, dissolve, and quite forget
What thou amongst the leaves hast never known;
The weariness, the fever, and the fret,
Here where men sit and hear each other groan;
Where palsy shakes a few sad last grey hairs,
Where youth grows pale and spectre-thin and dies,
Where but to think is to be full of sorrow
And leaden-eyed despairs;
Where beauty cannot keep her lustrous eyes,
Nor new love pine for them beyond to-morrow."

"Oh, for the time when I shall sleep
Without identity;
And never care how rain may steep,
Or snow may cover me!
Oh, let me die—that power and will
Their cruel strife may close;
And conquered good and conquering ill
Be lost in one repose!"

"To thy dark chamber, mother earth, I come;
Prepare my dreamless bed for my last home;
Shut down the marble door,
And leave me—let me sleep;
But deep, deep,
Never to waken more."

"The past rolls forward on the sun
And makes all night. O dreams begun,
Not to be ended! Ended bliss,
And life that will not end in this!
My days go on, my days go on.

"Breath freezes on my lips to moan:
As one alone, once not alone,
I sit and knock at Nature's door,
Heart-bare, heart-hungry, very poor,
Whose desolated days go on . . .

"Only to lift the turf unmown
From out the earth where it has grown,
Some cubit-space, and say, 'Behold,
Creep in, poor heart, beneath that fold,
Forgetting how the days go on.'"

"Strew on her roses, roses,
And never a spray of yew;
In quiet she reposes—
I would that I did too."

"I give the fight up! let there be an end,
A privacy, an obscure nook for me:
I want to be forgotten even by God!"

"Now should I have lain still and been quiet, I should have slept; then had I been at rest. With kings and counsellors of the earth, which built desolate places for themselves; or with princes that had gold, who filled their houses with silver. There the wicked cease from troubling, there the weary be at rest. There the prisoners rest together; they hear not the voice of the oppressor. The small and great are there; and the servant is free from his master. Wherefore is light given to him that is in misery, and light unto the bitter in soul? Which long for death, and it cometh not; and dig for it more than for hid treasures. Which rejoice exceedingly and are glad when they can find

the grave? . . . Before I go whence I shall not return, even to the land of darkness and the shadow of death. A land of darkness, as darkness itself; and of the shadow of death; without any order, and where the light is as darkness. . . . I have said to corruption, Thou art my Father, and to the worm, Thou art my Mother and my Sister."

"Therefore I hated life: because the work which is wrought under the sun is grievous unto me: for all is vanity and vexation of spirit. . . . For that which befalleth the sons of men, befalleth beasts; even one thing befalleth them: as the one dieth, so dieth the other; yea, they have all one breath; so that a man hath no pre-eminence above a beast: for all is vanity. All go unto one place; all are of the dust, and all turn to dust again. Who knoweth the spirit of man that goeth upward, and the spirit of the beast that goeth downward upon the earth? . . . Wherefore I praised the dead which are already dead more that the living which are yet alive. . . . For there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave whither thou goest. . . . Vanity of vanities, saith the preacher, all is vanity."

"Cursed be the day wherein I was born: let not the day wherein my mother bare me be blessed. Cursed be the man who brought tidings to my father, saying, A man-child is born unto thee: making him very glad. And let that man be as the cities which the Lord overthrew and repented not; and let him hear the cry in the morning, and the shouting at noontide: because he slew me not from the womb; or that my mother might have been my grave, and her womb to be always great with me. Wherefore came I forth out of the womb to see labour and sorrow, that my days should be consumed with shame?"

"For to fear death, O Athenians, is nothing else than to appear to be wise, without being so: for it is to appear to

know what one does not know. For no one knows but that death is the greatest of all goods to man; but men fear it as if they well knew that it is the greatest of evils. . . . And if it is a privation of all sensation, as it were a sleep in which the sleeper has no dream, death will be a wonderful gain. For I think that if any one, having selected a night in which he slept so soundly as not to have had a dream, and having compared this night with all the other nights and days of his life, should be required on consideration to say how many days and nights he had passed better and more pleasantly than this night throughout his life; I think that not only a private person, but even the great king himself, would find them easy to number in comparison with other days and nights."

"O eloquent, just, and mighty Death! whom none could advise, thou hast persuaded; what none hath dared, thou hast done; and whom all the world hath flattered, thou only hast cast out of the world and despised; thou hast drawn together all the far-fetched greatness, all the pride, cruelty, and ambition of man, and covered all over with these two narrow words, *Hic jacet.*"

"It seems to me strange, and a thing much to be marveilled, that the laborer to repose himself hasteneth as it were the course of the sun; that the mariner rowes with all force to attaine the port, and with a joyfull crie salutes the descried land; that the traveller is never quiet nor content till he be at the end of his voyage; and that we in the meanewhile, tied in this world to a perpetuall taske, tossed with continuall tempest, tyred with a rough and cumbersome way; yet cannot see the end of our labour but with griefe, nor behold our port but with teares, nor approach our home and quiet abode but with horrour and trembling."

"I have often thought upon death, and I find it the least

of all evils. All that which is past is a dream; and he that hopes or depends upon time coming, dreams waking. . . . Physicians in the name of death include all sorrow, anguish, disease, calamity, or whatsoever can fall in this life of man either grievous or unwelcome; but these things are familiar unto us, and we suffer them every hour, therefore we die daily. I know many wise men that fear to die; for the change is bitter, and flesh would refuse to prove it: besides, the expectation brings terror, and that exceeds the evil. *But I do not believe that any man fears to be dead, but only the stroke of death.*"

"Death has its consideration but in terror; and what is assumed from that is like the imagination of children in the dark, a mere fancy and opinion. . . . .It has been slandered, most untruly, most unjustly slandered. For either happiness it contains, or it repels calamity, or gives satiety and weariness an end, or does prevent the hardness of old age. . . . Death only is the haven to receive us, where there is calmness and tranquillity, where there is rest from all these storms and tempests. In that port all fluctuations of our life are quieted and composed; nor winds nor seas have power upon us there; fortune and time are excluded from that road; there we anchor in security, without the distractions of new troubles; there without danger or hazard do we ride."

"If we begin to die when we live, and long life be but a prolongation of death, our life is a sad composition; we live with death, and die not in a moment. . . . Time sadly overcometh all things, and is now dominant, and sitteth upon a sphynx, and looketh to Memphis and old Thebes; while his sister Oblivion reclineth semi-somnous on a pyramid, making puzzles of Titanian erections, and turning old glories into dreams. History sinketh beneath her cloud. The traveller as he paceth amazedly through these deserts, asketh

of her who builded them, and she mumbleth something, but what it is he heareth not."

"Through me did he become idolatrous; and through me it was by languishing desires that he worshipped the worm, and prayed to the wormy grave. Holy was the grave to him; lovely was its darkness; saintly its corruption."

"After acute agony, death is like sleep after toil. After long decay, it is as natural as sunset. . . . Nature adorns death, even sets in smiles the face that shall smile no more. But you group around it hideous associations, and of the pale phantom make an appalling apparition. . . . Why should you not conspire with Nature to keep death beautiful?"

"Sovereigns die and sovereignties: how all dies, and is for a time only, is a 'Time-phantasm, yet reckons itself real!' . . . They are all gone, sunk, down, down, with the tumult they made: and the rolling and the trampling of ever new generations passes over them; and they hear it not any more for ever. . . . O poor mortals, how ye make this earth bitter for each other, this fearful and wonderful Life fearful and horrible; and Satan has his place in all hearts! Such agonies and ragings and wailings ye have, and have had, in all times: to be buried all in so deep a silence; and the salt sea is not swoln with your tears."

These, and such as these, are the anthem-words and hymns, the lessons and litanies and ejaculations, which she intones and recites in her wonderful self-worship: these and such as these are the incantations of the spell wherewith she so utterly subdues me. Whatever faith in immortality or hope of resurrection their context may avow, she ignores with solemn disdain. She murmurs them at intervals, rhythmically, she croons them over and over again, in her weird remote voice, while leading me on and on, through "the wide-winding caves of the peopled tomb." And between them, around them, past them, lapses slowly the full dark

flood of her own monotonous eloquence ; as Lethe may lapse for ever unrippled and unhurried, between its banks of pallid poppies, beneath the broad still leaves of its black lotus, past the crumbling islet grave-mounds which are as stepping-stones for sad Imagination when she would explore to the dimmest end, where the stream so nearly stagnant is swallowed in Chaos and aboriginal Night.

"Am I not kind?" she asks me, "am I not kinder far than all the gaudy Patronesses of Life? They bring agitation, I give rest ; they bring the hopes which ever deceive, I give consummate fruition ; they bring Memory, the sad, the grievous, the remorseful, I give Lethean absolution from the Past ; they bring Time, I give timeless Eternity. All their woes, wants, sins, despairs, I translate into the beatitude of unconsciousness. This bone moulders forgetful that it slew a brother man ; this skull decays unremembering that it harboured schemes of monstrous wickedness ; these lips wither untormented by the cruel lies they have framed ; these empty sockets crumble unaware of what hell-fire once burned in them. The limbs are weary no more ; the heart-throb and the brain-throb are quiet for ever. Better the worms fretting that heart than the lusts and passions which fretted it of old ; better the worms winding through that brain than the thoughts which used to possess it. I admit that the evil once conceived or done is indeed everlastingly existent (as it was indeed everlastingly pre-existent), still pulsing on apparent or unapparent, poison circulating with the life-blood of the world, until the world itself shall be exhausted ; but the evil-doer is no more ; the poison glass is shattered with the glass that held the wine ; his personality is dissolved, his responsibility is diffused throughout the whole world ; he is safe in the sanctuary of Oblivion. His crimes and sins (which you brand with harshest emphasis, in your unfraternal cruelty and injustice to each other), are indeed recorded as

debts in the great Account Book, the infallible Ledger of the Universe: but in vain would the debtor be cited, for he is not; his very name will in a few brief years be illegible. For myriads and myriads and myriads of talents lost or misapplied, Nature seems continually pleading against an unknown number of debtors unknown; for they are all surely shielded and hidden by Nature herself, by Me the divine Oblivion, in the depths of the inviolable grave. For She, who is the sole head of the house, alone knows the profit and the loss of all the intricate commerce; and takes upon herself the liabilities as she takes to herself the acquisitions of all her agent children—salaried so poorly with golden joy and paper hope for their hard life-service.

"But you murmur that if the evil thus elude the punishment of their evil, the good must be defrauded of the recompense of their good. For those who have in this life been afflicted with the worst of all afflictions, an evil nature, ought to be punished after death for that supreme misery of their life! and those who in this life have been blessed with the richest of all blessings, a virtuous nature, ought to be rewarded after death for that supreme happiness of their life! And if the evil have no resurrection, the good can have no resurrection: though evil is the essence of nothingness and death, and good is the essence of being and life! It is hard indeed to teach aught of natural and simple truth to the children of men. The vulture, the tiger, the serpent, the lamb, the dove, the butterfly, have life's lesson perfectly by instinct; but man, weaving and ravelling it through the convolutions of his superior brain, still spells it for the most part backwards, and distorts the prayer of thanksgiving into a blasphemous curse.

"You complain, my poor child, on account of the good; but the good themselves, be assured, complain *not*. It is true that the evil suffer in life, and are blessed when here in

their mother's bosom they are safe from life's suffering; but it is not true that the good rejoice in life, and are injured here by privation of life's joy. Unconsciousness, which is the sole perfect anodyne, can never be a harmful poison. Nor are the good on earth the happy any more than the evil, though these are truly cursed and those are truly blessed. The only men and women happy in life are such as not even you can imagine in a glorious life hereafter. Very sad, overwhelmingly sad, 'with great heaviness and continual sorrow in his heart,' lives a holy loving man. Look abroad over your sin-ulcered earth, and say how shall such a one dare to rejoice! Jesus must be a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief; and tradition shall record of him that he was known to weep but never known to laugh: how could he laugh, while his brethren throughout the whole world were in horrible bondage of ignorance, wretchedness and sin? I say unto you that your God Himself, the God whom your seers have beheld in vision, throned omnipotent and eternal in the Heaven of Heavens, veiled with burning glory, amidst countless legions of quiring seraphim and adoring saints, *He* could not be what you call happy while one cry of suffering ascended from His earth or one spark of evil glowed in His hell.

"Sin ought to be punished and virtue rewarded! And the sins of your race are so voluntary and Satanic, that no limited time can contain their retributions; the virtues of your race are so inherent and divine, that no period less than Evermore has capacity for their recompense! When will you be persuaded and possessed by the truth which you heard chanted long ago, the truth that there is no punishment and no reward, that every being by its own nature weaves every thread of the web of relations connecting it with the world around?

"You cannot but trust that the pure, and the brave, and

the wise, really merit an after-death recompense, that their noble faculties really claim after-death spheres of exercise and continual growth. Whomsoever Fate hath dowered with purity, valour, or wisdom, to him in that one gift Fate hath been unusually bountiful; and he may well be content, however adverse seem the circumstances of his lot. Let the impure have high rank, and the coward lavish wealth, and the fool princely sway: the rank and the wealth and the sway are even to human judgments miserably inadequate compensations for inherent vileness, are generally even to human judgments miserable aggravations of the inherent vileness. But, after death? Oh, believe me, there is not one among you whom his fellows justly account saint, or sage, or hero (being really an Excelsior, like the monarch of Lilliput, some nailbreadth taller than those around him, striking awe into the beholders), who would if it were permitted him go alone to the great Demiurgos to whom is intrusted the management of this mysterious World-Drama, and plead: I have performed the part allotted to me in this short life-scene so magnificently well, and have enjoyed it so thoroughly, that I must be allotted another and a higher part in the scene which is to follow. Still less would or could he plead: I must be allotted parts ever higher and higher in all the successive scenes until the Farce-Tragedy shall end with Time; and when the Drama and Time are ended, I must be glorified with apotheosis and be a little god for ever with the one great God in Eternity.

"Were Fate ever thus tender of individuals, thus dotingly fond of the rare beings in the world that seem perfect in their kind, very few men and women in comparison with what men and women call the inferior creatures and lifeless things would be found worthy of enduring existence. Some rose might proffer a valid claim; some rose which has blushed

beauty and exhaled perfume to the uttermost sweetness of its nature; some rose which is as the microcosm of golden dawns and crimson sunsets; the rose by which Sharon is divine and Schiraz dream-lovely; the rose on whose petals Dante in fire-dew enamelled the names and marshalled the hierarchies of your supreme Heaven:* or a lamb without spot or blemish, type of Him who is there worshipped for ever and ever: or a dove, in whose form the Paraclete descended on the only Son of your only God. But a man! In the whole long masquerade of History, how many men, how many women, can be found whom even you would think white enough for the candidature? In the abundant treasures of your language, many, many names appear which are in themselves poems, and which therefore participate in the lasting life of beauty, but few of these class human kind. Gold, wine, lily, rose, dove, eagle, lion, panther, moon, star, dawn, dusk, river, meadow, each of these is in itself idyl, or lyric, or ode; but not man, not woman, not child, not infant, perhaps of all the terms that class humanity only youth and maiden, mother and babe.

"Ah, I catch your murmur: *God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him!* Yes; and the whole world is the image of God; for every creature and thing and circumstance in it is an uttered thought, a developed volition, of the universal life you term God. But when I led you so long through the streets of the great city, that vast crowded encampment of what you call Life, whose gloom is more appalling than the gloom of these subterranean sepulchres of Death; when you gazed into the eyes of all who passed, myriads on myriads innumerable; in how many

* "In forma dunque di candida rosa
Mi si mostrava la milizia santa,
Che nel suo sangue Cristo fece sposa."
—*Del Paradiso*: Canto xxxi.

among them did you recognise the image of God? Oh, the mean stupid faces, the mean dull eyes, the mean puckered foreheads, the mean formless eyebrows, the mean loose or pinched lips, the mean gross or withered bodies, the mean slouching gait, of the mass of them! And what were the chief variations from the prevalent meanness? Despair, ferocity, life-weariness, cunning, starved misery, immense greed or lust. If ever anything of divine began incarnation in those forms, it must have long ago shrunk away from the pollutions. So far are they now from any trace of the divine, that the very manhood and womanhood have long been crushed out of them. If one in a thousand was comely to the first glance, he was coarse or imbecile to the second; if one in ten thousand was lovely to the first glance, she was mindless or soulless to the second. The haughty capital out of its thousands of thousands can scarcely show a hundred men and women. What used to startle you into common life when the periods of the visions I gave you power to see were fulfilled? Some painted girl soliciting to impurity, some child in colourless rags begging for bread, some reeling drunkard hoarsely singing or blaspheming. For such goodness and comfort as you have among you never accost strangers, but go about carefully shut up in themselves. If one whom you know not ventures to address you, your first feeling is of distrust and defiance: this is your instinctive judgment of each other. Poor men, and women more wretched! I could weep for you bitter tears, even I the Shadow, were I not consoled by the knowledge that so soon ye shall all sink into my bosom, so soon be gathered tenderly from loathsome, shameful, miserable life into the beautiful and innocent sleep of death: and the sleep shall be everlasting.

"Still you urge that it is not because of perfection here, but of imperfection here, that Man claims a developing

Hereafter: his aspirations announce their own fulfilment;" his life should be a continuous indefinite ascension toward the unapproached Highest, ascending evermore because never attaining. Why his life alone, and not that of the worm, of the oyster? And do your aspirations, whose result you know, your aspirations limited to the things of this life, do you find that these generally announce their own fulfilment, or do you find that in fact they are never really fulfilled? And, if the development should prove a development of decay and corruption, not of healthy growth? If the tendency already in the little lifetime has curved round from upwards to downwards? Shall man ascend for ever and ever, and the poor toad and sponge never climb a grade? And what of the roses that are blighted in the bud, the lambs that are never sheep, the little unfledged things that never have their bird-life, the saplings, the acorns, that never grow into trees, the number-confounding spawn-germs that never attain definite individual existence? Shall all these, likewise, be granted a compensatory resurrection, that they may live up to the maturity of which here they were defrauded, and then grow more strong and beautiful for ever? For all these have certainly not much less capacity for indefinite ascension than has man. I have studied him now for many ages, and I find that his capacity is very limited; his *could* and *might* are scarcely larger than his *can*. He always gets drunken already on much strong truth; he always gets insane with much pure holiness.

"Why are you so unwilling to acknowledge your relationship with all the rest of the world and its creatures? Being so weak, and therefore so miserable, why would you disown the great family alliance? Succumbing inevitably to the least weighty strokes of Doom, you will yet rather bear them yourselves than be solaced and tended by the kindly earth that bore you. So you glut your perversity at the expense

of your happiness like so many sulking children :—and, after all, the denial of kindred destroys not the fact of kinship. Of what use to sneer: This is not, this shall not be my brother'! when you both issued from the same womb? Let no atom in the world be proud; it is now in the heart of a hero, it may soon be in a serpent's fang. Let no atom in the world be ashamed; it is now in the refuse of a dunghill, it may soon be in the loveliest leaf of a rose. Each monad in its time plays many parts, and perhaps in the course of the world's existence plays all; and in spite of yourselves your being is expanded beyond its own miserable limits into fellowship and affiance and mysterious identity with the being of all the universe.

"When will you freely and gladly own the truth that whatever is born in Time must decay and perish in Time? As your race studies fossil relics of plant and shell and gigantic animal, so shall future existences (to you in their kind inconceivable) study fossil relics of your race. For every kind has its own æon, and when its æon is fulfilled becomes extinct: while your earth is by many signs so young in its æon; and you by your pruriency, your unbounded self-esteem, your pugnacity, your brutality, your ignorance, your weakness, are so plainly among the less noble thoughts and imaginations of its youth (closely succeeding the wild childish extravagances of mammoth, pterodactyl, ichthyosaurus, and the convulsive infant rages of flood and fire); that many much higher races than yours must surely be brought forth ere it reaches its prime and commences to decay. The races flourish and die out, and Demiurgos has no care for individuals. The coral insects swarm in the sea, of which they know a fraction more than equivalent to that which man knows of this visible universe; and they are distinct in their individualities and generations as are the children of men; and each dies having wrought its

cell; and one cell is so much vaster (even to the thousandth of a line) than any of those around it, that it may well be long famed amongst them far and wide as a stupendous work; so the coral-reef grows by imperceptible increments until it almost reaches the surface of the sea; then the æon of the brood is finished, the life-period is fulfilled with the life-task, they cannot exist in the upper air; and the reef which is their stupendous self-wrought catacomb and mausoleum becomes an island, nourishing and sheltering quite new forms of life. The ancient Egyptians have left a few tombs, columns, pyramids; these insects leave behind them hundreds of leagues of reef well-founded from the floors of the deep sea: which, Egyptians or insects, are more serviceable to the after-world? You have visited a great library, which is a species of human coral-reef; and you have beheld thousands upon thousands of volumes closely ranged around: these are the painfully elaborated sepulchral *exuviæ* of once living human intellects; and each contributed in some infinitesimal manner to the growth of knowledge; but how few of all do even you insects of the same race now distinguish and examine, though many were accounted great and wonderful works in their time; and those which to you are still great and wonderful, what are they to any other race? What are they even to such of you as dwell in another spot of this earth-grain and babble in a different tongue? They advanced a little what you pleasantly call science, they carried up the intellect to reach beyond themselves into new levels of thought; their work was then done; they are but names, the Library is a myriad-coffined sepulchre of dead minds.

"Nature has no care for individuals; and races and times are but individuals in broader genera and longer times, and these again in yet broader and longer; and Oblivion must cover all. Yet you poor mortals agonise for fame, and

lavish much of your really finest bombast concerning "immortal renown," while the greatest and the noblest, together with the worst and the meanest, can but last as names for a few generations among a very few of their own kind, on a speck of this mottled dust-grain in the universe of space and time, which itself may be a dust-grain invisible amidst universes *not* of space and time, known by senses more and infinitely more vivid than yours, cognised by intellects whose laws and powers are indefinitely grander than those with which you are endowed. Ah, you endeavour to persuade yourselves that your minute glowworm soul-sparks lamp Infinity and Eternity; you have been generous enough to create a God who certainly never created you; you dissect him, every bone, nerve, and tissue; chemically analyse him into ultimate substances or substance; you exhibit him set up as an anatomical specimen, or elaborated into algebraical formulæ, and designed in geometrical diagrams, in your metaphysical and theological discourses, your Athanasian creeds and the like: and yet you cannot say why the grass grows; you cannot prove whether the world and your own selves do or do not really exist; and the few of you who have reflected a little are conscious that

> 'The deep enormous Night unfurls
> Its bannered darkness left and right
> In solemn mockery of such light.'

"I am just, though you conceive me so unscrupulous: I the sexton of the whole world-graveyard, the architect of the all-housing tomb, the weaver of the all-enveloping shroud, the planter of the all-shading cypress, the voice of the everlasting *Requiescant*—that dirge which is indeed a solemn triumphal hymn; I am just as Fate, impartial as Destiny; and the laws of my dealings are strict as that covenant in accordance with which the earth wheels round

the sun. Here a fire smoulders out under the oppression of its fuel, there one expires for lack of fuel; here a fire burns steadfastly in calm, there one flares fiercely in storm; but all alike in subjection to the same universal laws; and all alike must at length be extinct, when all the fuel of each is devoured. There is one glory of the sun, and another of the moon, and another of the stars, and yet another of the household lamp; and for each its own lustre and its own æon is meted out by itself, by what itself is; its own nature gives its own vitality and destiny. No being can receive more than its capacity will hold; a finite being can no more receive eternal life than a desert-well-shaft can hold the ocean.

"Fire the pure, the spiritual, the absolute, fire whose heat is love, and light is truth, *this* indeed subsists for ever in eternity; but all the material atoms and bulks upon which it feeds (and some of which account themselves living beings and immortal spirits during the process of the burning) must be sooner or later consumed. None lives in itself; its life is that without itself, though penetrating and informing it, which consumes it away; its being is the being dissolved into nothingness. For apart from the infinite eternal empyrean there is no self-subsisting fire. Go in to your chamber and seal up all its outlets, so that the air which it contains be quite cut off and shut in from the world's universal atmosphere; and very soon you will not respire but expire therein; it will be for you not the breath of life, but the miasma of death. Even so must what you call your individual spirit perish could it be cut off from the universal spirit; and the nearest approach you can make to this, intense and long-continued self-absorption, is recognised among yourselves as madness.

"I am just, as I am indeed gracious. As cold comes not, but heat departs; as darkness grows not, but light fades; so

the black pall and the wan shroud with which I cover up the dead, are but the smoke and the ashes of their own burnt-out fires. The burning of the fire, the writhing of the flames, are torture and restless longing; I am the eventual coolness and repose. That which you call the World with its creatures—this gross multiform mass of matter consuming in the fervency of the one spirit—shall indeed at last be utterly annihilated. The law flames before your eyes in material analogies, the doom stamps itself into your consciousness by material symbols. Behold how the nebulous continuity of your sun-system has parted and congealed into separate calcined orbs hollow and centrally candent; and all are dwindling in the millennial cycles, and shall dwindle until the last fire-sustaining atom is exhausted, and remnant there is none of the worlds opaque in the infinite unadulterate empyrean. But now 'in the midst of life you are in death:' not merely *liable* to death, as so shallowly you are wont to interpret the great truth into a truism; but *in* death; you and your transitory phantasmal Universe of matter floating in the midst of the eternal Divine Life which alone is Reality. The life surrounds you, clasps you, supports you, penetrates you, informs you, consumes you; but you are not the life any more than the submerged sponge is the ocean or the vanishing cloud is the air. The more intense your so-called life, the more of ecstatic and swiftly consuming torture do you suffer; the pure fire pierces you through and through; when the pure fire pervades and possesses you wholly, you are no more; in the instant of your attaining the perfect, the only true life, you are utterly annihilated. Of two men only is this divine consummation recorded in your very astonishing Holy Writings; and it is certain that you are wont to die now not by utter consumption of your materiality, but for want of the informing fire; so you perish from separate organisation, leaving abundant

carcass to swell the earth's general stock and be worked up and consumed in other forms.

"I am generous, as I am indeed just. With me you shall sleep perfect sleep, dreamless shall be your slumber: the darkness is infinite, the repose is ineffable, the silence is divine. You dream that they who have sunken wearily into my arms, and have been hushed to sleep on my bosom, and have been laid away and covered up in the bed which I prepare for all, often arise from the rapturous rest, and steal out of the undisturbed dormitory, and wander the upper earth tortured and goaded by evil memories; and you affright yourselves with visions of them thus restlessly wandering. Most strange and calamitous delusion! The bed is too soft, the embrace too maternally dear, the trance is too profound, the oblivion too beatifically perfect for them ever to dream (if dream they could) of arising and revisiting that cold naked storm-beaten upper world of the 'Life which is a disease.' Could any who now lie here, quietly resolving into quiet earth, which again is dissolving and surely perishing into nothingness; could any of these awake for a moment, and remember, and have power to contrast their perfect sleep in my bosom under the folds of my vesture (whose shadow is holy and blessed as the shadow where *Sheckinah* dwelt, under the wings of the cherubim over the mercy-seat), with their ever-troubled wakefulness on earth, with the

> 'Famine, and bloodless Fear, and bloody War,
> Want, and the want of knowledge how to use
> Abundance'——

how would they shrink with horror from the suggestion of returning, how would they smile triumphantly compassionate at your fearful hints of evil memories, how would they nestle back into the slumber-place athirst for the suckling nepenthe!

"If you really lived; knowing, and gladly accepting, and bravely working out your little part in the sublime economy of the universe; ever conscious of your insignificance as an isolated creature, but no less conscious of your lofty and even divine significance as one flame of the universal fire, one note in the infinite harmony; without arrogance, selfishness, delusion, disdain; without hope, or fear, or self-contradictory longing, yet burning with pure aspiration; then I would not preach to you thus, then not the Shadow but the Splendour would instruct you: for dying more and more daily by intensity of life into the impersonal and infinite and unconditioned, by supreme consuming domination and dominion of the spirit over matter, you would love death as the crowning glory of life, and reverence life as the *via sacra* of the triumph of death. But you have no hope, scarcely a dream, of thus living and dying. Yet you cling to your death-in-life, which you call life, while you never dare to really live; you, children afraid to go into the dark, although therein is your sole bed of rest. You dare not live up to even your own low thoughts of life: the mass of your works, ceremonies, laws, pleasures, are houses built to keep out the natural air, and blinds woven to temper the universal light. The sage studies a new science to escape an overwhelming sorrow, 'or haply by abstruse research to steal from his own nature all the natural man;' the soldier plunges into battle-blood-drunkenness to forget an unavailing love; the statesman weaves his mind into subtle webs of policy that so he may stifle some fierce passion; the poet chants victories he cannot fight to win, and beautiful happiness that can never be his lot; those most lavishly endowed by nature and by fortune are exactly those who suffer most from life-weariness. Who lives, who exercises and develops his whole nature joyously in his career? There is the cup of the wine of life; and scarcely one dares a deep draught

of its fiery intoxication, though scarcely one is willing to have the unemptied and not-to-be-emptied cup withdrawn. One short, trembling, rapturous sip in the flushed fervour of youth; then you draw back, frightened at your own rash hardihood, and seek stupid safety in soulless business and pleasureless pleasure. Again and again you wish to be dead for a time, to sleep unconscious until some wished-for moment, to be relieved from the tedious burthen of uneventful hours and days; and when the wished-for moment has come and gone, and you are once more disappointed, you would die again for another period; and so again and again; wishing for sleep and unconsciousness for a limited time, that is, wishing for short and imperfect death; and yet with the miraculous and incredible inconsistency of man, abhorring with wild fear the one true and perfect death. And you complain of the narrowness and poverty of life, though it lavishes upon you such wealth of hours and opportunities more than you can use or enjoy! And this in youth and health; but you would even rather cling to old age, weak and sick, without the power while yet with the desire to enjoy, than sink into death, which takes away the desire in removing the power: you would rather be Tantalus with his thirst, than without it.

"O my poor homeless weary children, return at least unaffrighted, since return is inevitable, unto the embrace of me, your mother! Have at least the courage and the candour to own that you dare not live true life, that you infinitely prefer dreamless rest to this weary wandering without a goal. Leave your alien wretchedness, and the famine which is fain to devour the husks that the swine do eat, and come home to the banquet of joyous rest, ye poor helpless prodigals; be not ashamed to acknowledge your yearning to have part in the glorious promise, 'He giveth his beloved sleep;' and fear not to come unto me for this beatitude of sinless

sleep; unto me the divine Oblivion dwelling ever throned in the realm whence you shall not return, even in the land of darkness and the shadow of death; a land of darkness as darkness itself, and of the shadow of death; without any order, and where the light is as darkness; where, O ye weary, sinful, desolate, orphan ones, where the wicked cease from troubling, where the weary be at rest!"

. . . . . .

And the thin weird voice of the Shadow dies away remote in the dense blackness subterranean, as a star-speck dwindles in the formless night; and the gloom, so deep and crushing in the revelation of her voice, grows deeper still and yet more awful in the following utter silence.

PROPOSALS

FOR

THE SPEEDY EXTINCTION OF EVIL AND MISERY.

1868, 1871.

—o—

THE following Proposals were forwarded to us by our esteemed contributor, with a letter, from which we extract our justification for producing them in these columns :—

"Most of your readers would certainly not understand this magnificent essay, but would regard it as mere mad raving; and the majority of the few who could understand it would feel outraged and enraged because its plans of reform are so immensely vaster than their own, for you are merely national reformers, while my reforms are for all mankind and the universal world. I therefore advise you for your own sake not to print the piece at all, but to send back the MS. endorsed 'Returned with thanks.'

"But if you decide to print it, I counsel you to introduce it to your public with a note to the following effect:

"As we allow all parties to express their views in this periodical, and as moreover B. V. is an old contributor, we insert the following; but we are bound to remark that, in our

opinion, it would have been more fitly sent to the *Colney-Hatch Journal* or the *Bedlam Times*, than to us.

"Or: We insert the following as a frightful example of the extremes to which human aberration can go, trusting that it may prove an effectual warning to such of our readers as have turned aside from the pathway of reason.

"Or: We must distinctly beg our readers to understand that we agree with about nothing in the following essay, so far as we can make out any sense at all in it. If the matter were not so thoroughly unimportant, it would be rather interesting to know whether the author himself has the least notion of what he means, always supposing that he means anything.

"Or: In so far as this miserable essay mocks rational national reformers, its impudence is only equalled by its impotence. In so far as it is serious, it is as mad as hydrophobia.

"A mild disclaimer on your part, such as one of the above, would not at all hurt my feelings, or disturb my equanimity, while it would tend to vindicate you in the judgment of your readers."

I.

"Your promised Reformation is so indispensable; yet it comes not: who will begin it—with himself?"—CARLYLE: French Revolution, vol. i. book 2, chap. 8.

"But the lofty spirits of my century discovered a new, and as it were divine counsel: for not being able to make happy on earth any one person, they ignored the individual, and gave themselves to seek universal felicity; and having easily found this, of a multitude singly sad and wretched they make a joyous and happy people."—LEOPARDI: Palinodia.

"Whether the human race is progressing is a strange unanswerable philosophical question. Why is it not asked, Does the human race alter? This question is higher. Only from alteration can we draw any inference as to improvement or the opposite."—NOVALIS: vol. ii. p. 268.

In the old young years, when I could still wonder at things which are human, I now and then wondered how it came to pass that while so many learned and subtle treatises had been written to solve the question of the origin of evil; treatises doubtless of great value if only the question would kindly condescend to be soluble; there had yet been so few essays towards the extinction of the said evil. It seemed to me that the doctors were letting the sick man perish before their eyes, while they discussed at length the remote origin of his maladies, instead of the present condition and the treatment instantly required. And it seemed to me that even those who did concern themselves with the present condition of the patient, the charitable associations and philanthropists generally, acted not as doctors who hoped to cure, but were rather as kind nurses who tried to soothe the sufferer and lessen the pangs of his certain perishing; they moistened his parched lips and wiped his damp brow, smoothed his pillow, tidied up his room, gave him narcotics and anodynes, humoured his sick caprices, spoke cheering words, and smiled vain hopes; but with the horrible, devouring, mortal cancer they did not even try to contend. I have since heard that in recent times, say within the last hundred years, projects for the universal reform and beatification of mankind have begun to abound; but as none of these (to the best of my knowledge) has been thoroughly realised, it follows that even if any of them are theoretically perfect they still remain practically imperfect, and that, therefore, the spacious ground is still to-let for system-building purposes. And I may modestly add that the said projects, in so far as I know anything of them, appear to derive from what I cannot but think a wrong principle; so that in my own poor judgment (which naturally is for me the one best judgment in the world) I am bound to prefer my own proposals, which derive from what I must esteem the true principle.

But here I bethink me that some one may deny the need or use of any such project; affirming (for what is there that some people will not affirm?) that mankind and the condition of mankind are as near perfection now as they ever will or can be, and that for the extinction of what we call evil and misery the human race and the world in which it dwells must be extinguished. To such a one I will only reply, before entering tranquilly on the exposition of my proposals, that he is far in the rear of our most advanced thinkers, and has but small share in the present glorious aspirations of Humanity; that if he does not take heed to himself he is in danger of becoming a cynic, an odious, yelping, snappish animal that lives in a tub, and pulls to pieces even this house, in order to fling the staves at decent people and trip up passers-by with the hoops; that if he feels no necessity, or has no hope, of becoming much better himself, the majority of us feel such want for ourselves, and have good hope that it shall be satisfied, if not in ourselves, yet in our more or less distant posterity, in which hope we find great and reasonable comfort; and lastly, that it is quite plain that myself and others would never weave projects and build systems for catching and caging the said evil and misery, if these did not actually exist, and were not to be caught and caged, just as there would never have been bird-traps and fishing-nets were there not birds and fish not only in being but liable to capture.

To me it seems clear that there are two radical universal reforms essential to the real triumph of any and every reform ever attempted or proposed, and that these two reforms once accomplished, all others will be found included in them; and I therefore consider them as solely entitled to our study and exertions. For who wishing to fell a tree, would bring it down leaf by leaf and chip by chip, if it could be effectually axed from the ground? and who, wanting to

purify a river, would filter it by bucketsful, if he could dam off the polluting drain higher up? The two reforms, to which I have reduced this vast problem, are simply a universal change to perfection of nature and human nature: of which I think that we as men should enterprise the latter first. The radical reform of human nature consists merely in this, that every human being shall put off the seven cardinal with all the minor sins, follies and defects, and shall at once in lieu thereof put on the seven cardinal with all the minor virtues, wisdoms and graces; or, in other words, that each shall annihilate in self the imperfect human nature, and create in self a perfect divine nature. When every human being has performed this easy double operation (of which the second part follows as naturally on the first as a step of the right foot one of the left), I am inclined to believe that the great work of the extinction of evil and misery, and the establishment of universal good and felicity, will be more than half accomplished. The radical reform of nature consists merely in this, that the universe shall be made altogether and exactly such as the perfect men shall require. With this second reform, I am further inclined to believe that the pilgrimage of man from hell on earth to heaven on earth will be completed; that evil and misery, both as suffering and vice, will be extinct beyond resurrection; that everybody will be good and happy everywhere evermore.

Some people, who have not bestowed upon this problem such long and painful thought as the writer, may at first sight deem that the radical universal reform of human nature, though of the utmost simplicity (being, indeed, but as putting off one suit of clothes and putting on another), will not be very easy to effect. But a little candid thought will prove to them that it must certainly be much less difficult than any of the merely partial and superficial reforms which

have been and are now being attempted; all of which this supersedes amicably by inclusion. For hitherto nearly all plans of reform have been trying to get plentiful fruit from a barren tree, and clean water from a foul stream; while this would first make the tree fruitful and the fountain pure. And hitherto nearly every reformer, whether social or political, moral or religious, has endeavoured to make a large number of men and women (not to speak of children), and has usually hoped to make in the course of time all other men and women (of whom no two can be quite like each other and no one quite like the reformer; and of whose various characters and temperaments, minds, bodies and circumstances he could know little or nothing), think and believe and act in precisely the same way as himself. But in the scheme I venture to propose, every man will modestly limit himself to the reform of one person only; which person he knows and loves infinitely better than any one else; and which person is of exactly the same character, temperament, mind and body, and always situated in exactly the same circumstances, as himself, the reformer.

II.

As this point is of capital importance, I think it well to bring to my assistance against all previous and other reformers (for whom, however, my feelings are of the most benevolent nature), two or three passages from writers of authority. And first I will quote from one of the most solid and useful sections of one of the greatest works of perhaps the greatest of our divines; Section ix. of "A Tale of a Tub:" being "A dissertation concerning the original, the use, and improvement of Madness in a Commonwealth." And I may remark that this subject has been strangely neglected

by other philosophers, considering how much every Commonwealth, whatever its form of government, has been and still is indebted to this noble condition of mind. "For what man, in the natural state or course of thinking, did ever conceive it in his power to reduce the notions of all mankind exactly to the same length and breadth and height of his own? 'Yet this is the first humble and civil design of all innovators in the empire of reason. . . . Now I would gladly be informed how it is possible to account for such imaginations as these in particular men, without recourse to my phenomenon of vapours ascending from the lower faculties to overshadow the brain, and there distilling into conceptions for which the narrowness of our mother-tongue has not yet assigned any other name besides that of madness or phrenzy." Montaigne also, who is usually so temperate in his language, cries out in a great passion of contemptuous indignation (book ii. chap. 32, "Defence of Seneca and Plutarch"): "It appears to each that the model form of human nature is in him; all others should be regulated in accordance with him: the ways which are not as his ways are feigned or wrong. What beastly stupidity! . . . Oh, the dangerous and insupportable donkeyishness! *Quelle bestiale stupidité! . . . O l'asnerie dangereuse et insupportable!*" And the great Italian writer already quoted, Leopardi, says ("Dialogue between Tristan and a Friend"): "*The individuals have given way to the masses*, say elegantly the modern thinkers. . . . Let the masses do all; though what they are to do without the individuals, being composed of individuals, I desire and hope to have explained to me by some of those now illuminating the world who understand individuals and masses." The careful reader will remark that the sarcasm here hinted does not touch me, while it wounds nearly all other reformers; they would reform by masses, I would reform by individuals; and my

plan, in brief, is the flourishing modern plan of division of labour carried to its utmost perfection in the moral world.

To make the distinction yet more clear, if possible, and more clear the inestimable superiority of my principle over any other, let me call attention to the very peculiar and almost incredible fashion in which great practical problems are worked out by the reforms and reformers still in vogue. As a very fair type of the reforms I will take the recent Electoral Reform Bill, whose logical outcome is universal suffrage, for greater stake in the country can no one have than dear life. The problem is: Given a vast number of timbers, nearly all more or less rotten, it is required to build a seaworthy ship. To which our Reform Bill answers in triumph: Let us use the whole lot indiscriminately! Or in other terms: Given a foul and deformed body politic, full of all manner of diseases, required to make it pure, handsome and healthy. To which our Reform Bill answers cheerfully: Let us clothe it in fine new constitutional garments, with splints, bandages, padding, a good wig, a glass eye, a few false teeth, and so forth, and a complete cure will doubtless be effected! Now I beg the candid reader to lay his hand upon his heart, and declare upon his honour whether he really can consider these enterprises very hopeful. The ship may turn out a very Great Eastern for hugeness, but she will be at least as unseaworthy as her timbers are rotten, however deftly put together; and the more timbers the less cohesion. The diseased monster may be dressed out to look tolerably well as a dummy, but there will be even less life and health in him than before when he is strangled with ligaments and smothered with padding. The idea of working such stupendous marvels dwelleth not in me. My proposal modestly says: Let us get some sound timbers, and it will not be very hard to build with them a sound ship; let us get the pure, hand-

some, healthy body, and the question of clothes will not give us much trouble.

Not many readers will, I think, deny that when every human being has become perfect, the whole human race or society will be perfect also. But even with such perfection attained, there would probably still exist among mankind a large amount of suffering if the universe remained as it is. For not only man, but also the world in which man lives (or supposes himself to live), is at present very imperfect. I do not inquire into the origin of this mundane imperfection, any more than I inquired into the origin of human evil; I am content to propound a certain cure for both. How natural theologians manage to survey the world and find it all alive with divinity, find everywhere clear marks of a Creator infinite in goodness, wisdom and power, would certainly surprise me, if I were now capable of being surprised by any enormity of human folly or frenzy. For while in order to explain man's evil condition they have the excellent absurdities of Freewill and the Fall, even they do not pretend that the world has freewill, that it sinned and thus grew corrupt; yet surely the world is about as badly off, as far from perfection, as man. Let me note a few of its maladies and defects. This poor earth of ours suffers dreadfully with colics, heartburns, violent vomitings, convulsions, paroxysms; she has burning fire in her belly and heart; and some of us always suffer directly or indirectly from the throes of her suffering. She has but one moon, while Jupiter has four, Uranus six, Saturn seven; and her domains are much smaller than those of the majority of the other planets. She has been roughly crushed in at top and bottom, and these extremities are paralysed with cold; and uncouthly swollen about the middle, where she burns with a fierce inflammation. Her beauty has been thus seriously damaged, and she is moreover blotched with nasty boils and

ulcers of geysers and volcanos. Her axis has been shamefully jarred from rectitude; and her land and water are so unequally and irregularly arranged that she looks altogether lop-sided. Heat and light, with all things flowing from them, are very unfairly distributed over her body, and therefore among us who live upon her body. For such light and heat as she gets, she has to keep whirling and spinning round the sun in the most undignified and wearisome manner. The animals she brings forth (not to speak of the plants and the minerals) are in many cases ugly, unamiable, ferocious, and tormented with monstrous appetites, which can only be satisfied by devouring their fellow-creatures; nearly all of them are quite selfish and immoral; and the few of them that are philanthropic (such as surly old lions, tigers, wolves, sharks, vultures and other sweet carrion fowl; all genuine lovers of man) are almost as disagreeably so as our human philanthropists themselves. She has no moral character at all, and her moods are most capricious and violent. In her dealings with man she is seldom fair, and the unfairness is nearly always against man: thus she hardly ever grants him what he has not worked for, while she very often withholds from him what he has worked for. The ignorant creature knows nothing of the wise doctrines of Malthus, but spawns forth as many children of all sorts as ever she can, without the least prudential restraint. She has consequently far more than she can properly feed and rear; so that a large part perishes in infancy (and we are told that none of these except the human sucklings will rise to another life; poor bereaved monkey and donkey mothers, for instance, being altogether without the precious consolations of immortality); a considerable part is eaten up by mankind and other hungry animals, and the remainder can seldom get food enough. And with regard to man in particular; as the human race grows ever more numerous,

while the means of Mother Earth do not increase in proportion, she must age after age starve and half-starve more and more of us; and thus in a few thousand years, if she and we exist so long (and unless, of course, these my beneficent proposals be carried out), she will prove to us the stingiest old hag ever known. And looking beyond our own frigate the earth (of whose tender, the moon, I could say a good deal), and regarding our little fleet of the Solar System, we find that there is an absurd and perilous want of communication between the various vessels; that we not only cannot pass or signal to any of the others, but in fact know next to nothing of them, and absolutely nothing of their crews; so that in case of a threatened attack by corsair comet or shooting star we could concert no plan of common defence or evasion. Moreover, it is very doubtful whether the fleet is in a good position in the Sea of Space; and whether our flag-ship the Sun, who leads us cruising whithersoever he likes, is taking a judicious course for a prosperous voyage, or is but hurrying on recklessly, and likely to lead us to "eternal smash" among breakers; for not only are we never consulted as to the course, but we are never told anything about it when it has been settled, and so go drifting on for ever in a most ignominiously blindfolded fashion. And I might go farther still, and note many things in the universe beyond our system which probably need improvement or abolition; but I really have not spare time just now. I can only add a few short notes on things requiring amendment in the relation of Nature to Man. She treats our intelligence with profound disdain, never giving us the slightest trustworthy hint of her origin, character, business, processes, objects, and final causes, if indeed she really has any final causes or cause. She manifestly carries on her large business (whatever it really is) without any special care for our convenience or profit, being wont to ignore us with our

plans and wishes in the most exasperating way. She turns us out into the world without giving us any choice in the matter; though all other suffrages and freedoms are perfectly insignificant in comparison with that of which we are thus deprived, an effective and enlightened vote on the question: Shall I, or shall I not, be born? She only keeps us alive by a complicated system of the most shameful illusions, falsifying beyond rectification life, death, and after-death. Having made us take part in this poor puzzling game of life, she has taken care that all the rules shall be unfavourable to us: the cards are marked, the dice are loaded, we are always swindled. Thus years of hard work and self-denial are frequently lost by a slip or chance, but seldom or never saved by a chance. Our health may be ruined by a pin-prick, but never doubled by an accident. We fall seriously ill in a moment, and take weeks or months to recover; lose a limb by some sudden mishap, but never by a good hap regain it. We cannot reach even a low degree of wisdom or knowledge without long hard study, while to be ignorant and foolish is the easiest and most natural thing in the world for us. Our sorrows are real and enduring; our joys deceptive and transient; our prizes of victory are not to be compared with our forfeits of defeat. And so I might go on through an indefinite number of items in which we are unfairly dealt with; but these scanty hints must suffice for the present. Scanty as they are, I think they show conclusively that nature needs improving and perfecting no less than does human nature; and, in particular, that nature will have to be radically reformed in order to suit precisely our new perfect men.

III.

[*Note; personal, and therefore very interesting.*—With that dreadful perversity of malice which, as all long-suffering contributors know, characterises editors in general, the editor of this *National Reformer* hath played me an evil trick. For whereas, knowing well that the more our dear public needs redemption, the more is it disgusted with him who tries to redeem it; and knowing moreover that an editor's existence as editor strictly depends on the favour of this dear stupid public (the stoppage of the circulation of his periodical being quite as fatal to him as the stoppage of the circulation of his blood); I did with infinite generosity and self-sacrifice spontaneously and gratuitously furnish him with ample private and confidential notes for a public disclaimer on his part of any complicity in this my celestial scheme of universal reform, so that the full reprobation of its transcendent merits should weigh upon myself alone: he thereupon, in spite of my solemn written protest, did print and publish the said confidential notes in my name, thus making me seem to damnify my own invaluable essay, and bringing into doubt my intense seriousness, that quality of my character which, as a great moral reformer, I esteem more than almost any other of the lofty and shining virtues which keep me in profound obscurity.

Having thus vindicated myself at the editor's expense, I hasten to add that I will forgive him this atrocious breach of confidence (whatever injury it may do myself and the good cause to which I am devoted) as soon as I have made myself divinely perfect; but that in the meanwhile I am much tempted to exclude editors altogether from my scheme of salvation, as a class of men absolutely incorrigible. As the pious preacher pathetically exclaimed when he had been

cruelly mauled by the newspapers: "Ah, my dear brethren, and beloved sweet sisters, do any of you still hope that a journalist, and even an editor, can be saved? Verily, I say unto you, that if Jesus Christ Himself tried to haul up an editor into Heaven, the odds are more then ten to one that the editor would drag Him down into the Other Place; more than twenty to one, if the editor had edited an atheistic or a religious periodical." Amen.]

Having thus stated as clearly as I can what the two indispensable radical reforms are, I will go on to sketch my plan for speedily effecting them. But I must beg the reader to remark that I by no means lay so much stress on my particular process for bringing these about, as I do on my demonstration of the fact that these, and no others or other, are the reforms which must be brought about in order to extinguish evil and misery. In my diagnosis of the disease I have absolute confidence: the two (perhaps twin) maladies we must cure, to get a healthy and sane world, are imperfection in nature and imperfection in human nature. But thus much established, I do not pretend to assert that the physic and regimen I propose are the best that can be adopted; and, indeed, I am well aware that the treatment will be infinitely improved as soon as the process of cure has commenced. For it is manifest that immediately the first man has reformed himself to divine perfection, he will know infinitely better than I, and than all the present foolish wisdom of the world, how to set about persuading every other living human being to follow his happy example. I am here simply concerned to show to our present imperfect intelligence that the work is quite practicable, even with such means as we can now discern; and not only practicable, but a work which may be speedily and without much difficulty effected; trusting that when I have shown all this, one or more persons will be encouraged to take without delay the initial step (initial to the

universal enterprise, complete journey for himself or themselves), and straightway proceed to carry out the faultless process which his or their perfect wisdom and goodness will dictate.

It is obvious that if every human being now alive should forthwith read this my humble essay, and be persuaded by its evident reasonableness, and without loss of time make himself or herself perfect, then no other machinery would be required to accomplish the universal reform of human nature here proposed. Such immediate consummation is devoutly to be wished; but if I professed any hope of it I might be accused of an over-sanguine temperament; an imputation I am extremely anxious to avoid, knowing how it has retarded the triumph of every zealous reformer. I am therefore led to consider the best commonplace practical means, such as we are all familiar with in our daily life, of quickly attaining the end in view.

Let us suppose that there are three persons virtuous and intelligent among those who peruse this paper. I am aware that the estimate is very high, and would be quite extravagant in the case of almost any other periodical; and I certainly, for instance, would not venture to suppose such a great number among the readers of London's D. T. (which initials are commonly used to denote *Delirium Tremens*), although it assures us that it has the largest circulation in the world (it and our circumambient air, I presume; and which is the more windy let the great God of Flatulence judge).* But I have been assured by various disinterested people connected with the *National Reformer*, such as the editor, the sub-editors, the publisher, the printer, and more

* Render unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's. I remember, ere too late, that Heine sings somewhere somewhat as follows:—

Der Wind ist immer windig,
Sei's Sturm, sei's Westhauch lind;

than one of the contributors, that its subscribers and regular readers are a very choice set indeed. I will therefore hazard the estimate that there are among them three virtuous and intelligent individuals who can appreciate my proposals, and will forthwith set about realising the same. This trio will form the nucleus of a provisional committee, the sole qualification demanded in whose members shall at first be the fact that they have each thoroughly performed upon self the simple operation above-mentioned; each abolished in self the imperfect human nature, and substituted for it a perfect divine nature. I call this committee provisional, because I conceive that the members would not consent to its long existence, for fear of ruining their recently obtained moral and intellectual sanity. For our present wisest men (who, however, are mere idiots in comparison with the regenerate persons of whom I write) are unanimously of opinion that the being a member of any board or committee whatsoever utterly destroys the intellectual and moral nature of even the best and wisest, in all counsel and action connected with the said committee or board: so that it has been held that even the seven archangels, if constituted a special committee to further the glory of God (which surely is in sad need of furtherance), would without doubt make the Devil their managing director or secretary, and be wholly guided by him in all their corporate proceedings.

The work of the said provisional committee will simply consist in establishing and starting the Universal Perfection

Es fragt sich nur, wer wind'ger
Ist, er oder du, mein Kind?

The air is always airy,
Be it storm, be it zephyr mild;
The doubt is, which is airier,
The air, or you, my child?

This for the damsel; for the journal translate wind, windy, windier.

Company, Unlimited, whose noble object the title clearly indicates. No promotion money whatever will be paid in any form; and (for positively the first time in the history of joint-stock enterprise) *the whole of the profits will accrue to each of the Shareholders.* This company will at once proceed to make known to all the world my two essential reforms, and to persuade all the world to carry them out, persuading every human being as the first step to make himself or herself perfect. It will print this sublime essay, or an improved version thereof (for these perfect gentlemen and ladies will write even better than myself), in all languages of the globe, and send missionaries to spread the glad tidings by word of mouth. As expenses for travelling, printing, postage, stationery, etc., etc., will thus arise, it is probable that some small contribution in money, as well as the regenerate personal perfection, will be required for a time to qualify for membership. Suppose we fix the minimum of monetary contribution at twopence-ha'penny: and the rule will be that any one shall be registered a member on forwarding to the committee a certificate of perfection signed by a member, together with full name, address and occupation, if any, and subscribing if able the sum of twopence-ha'penny, or any integral multiple thereof not exceeding ninety-six thousand times the said unit of contribution, being a maximum of £1000 sterling, lawful money of Great Britain and Ireland, or its equivalent in any other currency; every subscriber being bound to declare that he retains at least as much property for his own support as he gives for the support of the company.

It is written, Thou shalt not steal; and I therefore gratefully acknowledge that I have borrowed this twopence-ha'penny and its multiples (not the cash, but the more precious notion) from the International Congress of Peace summoned to meet at Geneva on the 9th September, 1867, in whose

circular were these noble words, which should be set up conspicuous in letters of gold, or rather of bronze, in every bourse of Europe, for the confusion of a Mammon-worshipping age: That any one may become a member of the Congress by giving in his name and paying one or more subscriptions of twopence-ha'penny; "*Qu'il suffira, pour faire partie du Congrès, de s'inscrire et de verser une ou plusieurs cotisations de 25 centimes.*"

This twopenny-ha'penny Congress (I of course use this epithet in reverence, not in vulgar worldly depreciation) has, I am delighted to learn, solidified into a permanent International League of Peace and Liberty, holding an annual congress; and the next is to open on the twenty-fifth day of this happy month of September, 1871, at Lausanne. Fellow-citizens are invited to attend from every part of Europe, and from every quarter of the globe; and no doubt they will attend in millions, each bringing his or her name, and one or more contributions of twopence-ha'penny; unless, indeed, the millions consider it better economy to have congresses in their own districts, and contribute the amount of travelling expenses thus saved to the funds of the League. The recent glorious march of events on the Continent, the reign of unperturbed peace, and the triumph of unsullied liberty, amply testify to the beneficent and potent influence of this International League; so that I can veraciously avow, that were I not the unique universal reformer, I would zealously devote myself to saving up twopence-ha'penny, in order to become an exemplary passive member thereof. Only twopence-ha'penny and your name wanted to ensure the peace and liberty of the world! Never was a great reform less costly. He must be a mean or misanthropical wretch, if not quite indigent, who will not take part in the good work on such cheap and easy terms.

It will be found in the sequel of the text that I anticipate

the liberal assistance of this august League towards carrying out my own proposals, for the which assistance I here humbly thank it in advance: and I hereby solemnly and publicly pledge myself to remit to the said League, as a poor token of my rich gratitude for past and future favours, contributions of twopence-ha'penny to the number of one dozen, on receiving from the Central Committee an application for the same, accompanied by an authentic declaration that they are urgently needed in order to finish pacifying and liberating Europe, and the other four or five quarters of the globe; always supposing that, at the time of such application and declaration reaching me, my whole estate real and personal (all other liabilities satisfied) shall be of the required value of half-a-crown.

The maximum of contribution is my own property (I mean as idea; not, alas, in cash), as is also the rule that no one shall contribute more than half of his possessions; and I have fixed these conditions in order to prevent wealthy and liberal friends from excluding others from the privilege of subscribing in aid of the good work, and liberal friends who are not wealthy from subscribing their all, and thus having nothing left to live upon during the interval which must elapse ere the first of the two reforms be thoroughly effected; when money will be spurned with mild disdain by humanity (and even by womanity), when buying and selling and bartering will cease for ever, when everything shall belong equally to everybody, and everybody will desire less than his fair share. Oh, the splendid day that is now about to dawn!

IV.

A PROVISIONAL committee of three persons, even though each of them is perfect, may appear but a small instrument with which to set about the rather large job of perfecting

mankind and the universe; particularly when we consider in what a disastrous and horrible mess a similar committee of three perfect divine persons has now left us all, after working for upwards of eighteen centuries at the very same job. But a little thought shows us that this divine trio failed so utterly to improve man and the world, precisely because its members were gods and not men, were of heaven and not of earth: for astronomy has already resolved heaven into mere star-strewn space, illimitable, without local above or beneath; and philosophy has already resolved gods into delusive dreams and imaginations. And even if these poor deities, these vanishing phantasms of phantasms, had possessed any power, how could they have improved us? In their gospel of good tidings, our world and our flesh are classed with the Devil, as an infernal trio opposed to the trio of gods, as vile and abominable and desperately wicked, fit only for eternal chastisement or annihilation: the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost could only have improved us and our world out of existence. And, again, even if each of them separately had possessed some power, jointly as a committee they must have been utterly impotent; for in order to bring them into a spurious sort of unity, certain cunning theologians without bowels of compassion did bind these three wretched persons together, napes, armpits, elbows, wrists, thumbs, fingers, chests, loins, thighs, knees, ankles, heels, toes, with endless coils on coils of subtile iron wire, intertwisted and knotted beyond human conception and unravelling. Could their three bodies have been seen, they must have appeared as one amorphous lump of black and bursting flesh, swelling over furrows and gashes cut narrow and deep by the strained network; a red glare of agony, a spout of thick blood, indicating eye, mouth, or nostril in the featureless mass. Fortunately for the victims, it is pretty certain that any life they had when the process began, must

have been very soon strangled out of them. Specimens of the infernal instruments of torture, the meshes in which these divine persons were involved together so as to look like one abortion, may still be seen not without horror and compassion, in the creed called Athanasian, and in countless unreadable books explaining the inexplicable mystery of the Holy Trinity.

Now, my three perfect persons will be a very different trio from this Holy Trinity; they will be human beings made perfect, not gods; born of the earth, they will live and work on the earth, with solid bodies and a full equipment of carnal senses; and so far from being indissolubly bound together, the committee of which they are members will be only provisional, and each of them will be free to act just as he likes. There is thus nothing to dishearten me in the enormous failure of that committee of the three gods.

On the other hand, it is very encouraging to remember how each of the four or five great religious systems which now divide nearly all humanity between them, had its origin in the efforts of one or two poor men, who were themselves far from perfect. Thus Christianity was founded by the poor Jew Jesus (not at all the same person as our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, with whom he has been commonly and stupidly confounded, but indeed an immensely better character than the said Lord and Saviour), assisted by about a dozen poor men who were in no sense perfect, except as writers of Greek and speakers of all earth's languages, they being very ignorant Jews of the lower classes. These men and their human followers really built up the enormous Christian Church, though the whole credit (and discredit) of the achievement was monopolised by that inert and helpless committee of the gods. And if imperfect men could achieve so much, a work so great however misdirected, a work the more laborious because it was so

misdirected, think what perfect men will accomplish working always in the right direction. For here I must earnestly beg the reader (in case I still have one, besides him of the printing-office, who does not count) to meditate as thoroughly as he can the infinite advantages which cannot but result from the perfection in wisdom and virtue of every member of our proposed committee and company. Hitherto the men who have taken a leading part in working out any reform, or in diffusing any doctrine, have been imperfect like the rest of mankind, and all their converts have been ditto; and their personal defects and vices, their self-seeking, pride, cowardice, jealousy, ambition, their impatience, dishonesty, unwisdom, hypocrisy, etc., etc., etc., *ad infinitum*, have greatly impeded the progress and corrupted the purity of the cause they championed. The originator and leader has probably been an enthusiast of strong will or strong brain, or both; and of course very imperfect. Of his immediate and most sincere disciples, some have been intoxicated with his thought, too strong for their weaker heads, and in many cases too strong for his own; some have been mesmerically enslaved by his strong will, which in most instances has enslaved himself; some have been crazed by his enthusiasm, which has always more or less crazed himself. As the doctrine spreads more and more (for enthusiasm, however crazy, is the most successful of missionaries), thousands are impelled to profess it by mean and adulterate motives, perverting it to subserve what they think their self-interest; it is tempered to become the pliant tool of ambition, greed, vanity; and every convert, whether stupid or intelligent, modifies it as much as it modifies him. Thus exactly in proportion as the doctrine flourishes and triumphs as a worldly system does its original essential spirit fade away from it; so that the real life and teaching of a wealthy and powerful National Church can have little or nothing in

common with the life and inspiration of its remote founder. Try to fancy poor Jesus, for example, coming to life again (actually, not doctrinally), and learning that he was the founder, the teacher, the exemplar, the very God of Christendom; fancy him searching for some trait of his own life and ruling principles in the lives and ruling principles of the millions who call themselves Christians; fancy him in spiritual communion with the Pope, the cardinals, the bishops (though their lackeys would never admit him to the presence of any of these), the most prominent ministers of the various Christian sects. He would find himself an outcast in his nominal kingdom, denounced and reviled as a madman, an idiot, an impostor; the moral and intellectual life of Christendom would be as alien and bewildering to him as its steamboats and railways and telegraphs. Paul and the other early apostles, the ancient heathenisms of Greece and Rome, of the East and the West, old philosophies and older superstitions, national characteristics, physical and other circumstances, the growth of science, the ever-varying conditions of life and modes of thought; everything, in brief, affecting the character of the converts, has affected the religion. By the time a doctrine gets embodied in a Church or other institution, its original spirit has nearly vanished. Its progress may be well compared to the course of a great river, rivers being remarkably convenient things for all such analogies. Some remotest mountain-rill or rocky well-spring has the honour of being termed its source; and the name of this tiny trickling is borne triumphant down a thousand broadening leagues to the sea. The rill is soon joined by others, each very like itself. As it flows onward, ever descending (for this is the universal law), it is joined by streamlets and rivers more and more unlike itself, they having flowed through unlike soils and regions; and more

than one may be greater than itself, as the Missouri is greater than the Mississippi; and its own original waters are more and more modified by the new and various districts they traverse. As it proceeds, growing deeper and wider, villages and towns arise on its banks, and it receives copious tribute not merely of natural streams, but likewise of sewage and the pestilent refuse abominations of manifold factories and wharves. When it is become a mighty river, crowded with ships and bordered by some wealthy and populous capital, it may be a mere open *cloaca maxima*; and at any rate it must be as dissimilar in the quality of its waters as in their quantity and surroundings from the pure rill of the mountain solitudes, from the pure brook of the woodland shadows and pastoral peace. The waters actually from the fountain-head are but an insignificant drop in the vast and composite volumes of the thick bronze or yellow flood which finally disembogues through fat flat lowlands, in several devious channels with broad stretches of marsh and lagoon, into the immense purifying laboratory of the untainted salt sea. The remote rill-source is Christ or Mohammed, the mighty river is the Christian or Mohammedan Church; the sea in all cases is the encompassing ocean of death and oblivion, which makes life possible by preserving the earth from putrefaction.

Such has been the progress of even the best doctrines whose preachers and converts have been imperfect men. The doctrines may have been quite celestial in the abstract, but the propounders committed the fatal error of not providing for the elimination of human nature, or of providing for it in most impracticable ways. As I have often had occasion to remark, a religious or philosophical or any other system, is not merely a code of doctrines; it is the outcome of these doctrines combining in myriadfold action and reaction with human nature and earthly conditions. The doctrines may

be perfect on paper; but if they cannot work to good with or in spite of these bad coëfficients, they are perfectly useless. Urging men to fly seems much loftier doctrine than counselling them how to walk; but the men have legs, and if the teacher don't give them wings—? Either nature and human nature must be raised to the sublimity of the doctrine, or the doctrine must be lowered to them, if good practical results are to be obtained. My worthy predecessor Solon, recognising this truth, adopted the latter alternative in legislating for the Athenians, giving them laws not the best he could conceive, but the best they could receive. I adopt the bolder but infinitely preferable plan of levelling up instead of levelling down; providing that nature and human nature shall be made perfect to accord with my doctrine, and not my doctrine made imperfect to accord with them. In the Universal Perfection Company, Unlimited, there will be a constantly increasing potency and volume of perfection, unadulterated and undiluted by the least admixture of aught less pure and powerful. All the members being equally perfect will always be of one mind, so that the scandal of dissensions and schisms will be unknown. The wisdom and virtue of the members will be the best possible persuaders of the unregenerate who witness them. In short, if the studious reader will only go carefully and *seriatim* through all the errors and defects which are recorded in universal history as having vitiated earth's dead and dying religions and philosophies, he will find to his joyous astonishment that the Company I have the pleasure of promoting *gratis*, must by its essential constitution be perfectly free from every one of them.

V.

I AM, moreover, exceedingly encouraged by the well-grounded assurance that when our provisional committee of

duly-qualified persons has established the Universal Perfection Company, Unlimited, and well advertised the prospectus thereof, this Company will be at once joined by a vast number of rich and powerful, enthusiastic and disciplined members. For all societies of reformers, and all isolated reformers, as well as the most earnest and intelligent people of all religions and sects, will be obliged to discern that the said Company embraces in its plan all the reforms they seek. I will give a few leading instances; and I ask particular attention to them, as showing that the first of my two great reforms will in all likelihood be speedily effected.

All honest Christians and genuine Christian societies (supposing any such still extant) must be assured that the new perfect man will spontaneously reject all superstition, idolatry, error, all the wickedness of the world, the flesh and the Devil; and spontaneously accept the only true and infallible creed. Nor can these Christians fail to recognise in our first reform the capital requirement of Christianity. Jesus declares in the latest Gospel (John iii. 31): "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." And Paul, in his deepest epistle (Ephesians iv. 13, 22-24): "Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ. . . . That ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; and be renewed in the spirit of your mind; and that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness." In fact, my scheme is merely an improved Christianity. I abolish the gods and their correlative the Devil, who have always proved utterly inefficient, in whom no one has any longer a real living belief, and who will never be missed outside prayers and sermons; and I thus get rid of all the

dreary absurdities of dogmatic theology, all the damnable controversies of the sects; while at the same time I redeem salvation from its abject dependence on the impossible faith that an uncertain poor Jew, who did or did not live nearly nineteen centuries ago, was and is the Lord Christ. I make each man perfect himself instead of cringing for the grace of God, which never helped mortal: Help yourself, and heaven will help you, says the pious proverb; which means, that when man has done all the work, God is willing to appropriate the credit. I do away with heaven and hell, in which also no one out of Sunday school really believes; and I effect a vast saving of material by making a very heaven of this present world, instead of destroying it all as rubbish, and going to the ridiculous expense of building a new heaven and a new earth, and above all a new Jerusalem (as if one wasn't enough!). But such slight erasures and corrections as these are perhaps not worth mention, and will not hinder good Christians from seeing that the modern essay is essentially their own old Gospel; and I therefore count on their cordial co-operation.

The National Secular Society, with all Atheists, Theists, Deists, Pantheists, Pottheists, Necessitarians, Utilitarians, Positivists, etc., etc., must feel assured that the new perfect man will naturally always believe only what is in accordance with the purest and most enlightened reason; and will most zealously work for the greatest good of the greatest number, making as favourable as possible (and, as I trust to show, perfectly favourable) those circumstances which make and are made by men.*

* It may be worth while to note here, as I do not remember to have seen it noted elsewhere, that Necessitarians, being for the most part perfect reasoners (in so far as our present imperfection allows), naturally love to argue in that most perfect of figures, the circle. Their abstract doctrine runs: Man is the creature of circumstances. Their practical corollary is: Let us improve circumstances, and man will be proportionately improved. So circumstances

The International League of Peace and Liberty, together with all other Peace Societies and Liberal Associations, Socialists, Communists, Internationalists, must feel assured that the new perfect man will not fight with his brother, for it will not be his "nature to," nor will he seek to oppress his brother, nor will it be possible to oppress himself; and they must also feel assured that when all mankind and womankind are perfect, all will be absolutely equal in every respect, that everybody will be delighted to share everything with everybody else, and that the earth wisely worked will produce far more than enough for the wants of her human children. Nor is it likely that this perfect man will rest content with merely making all human beings free and equal: his delicate moral sense will probably perceive that other animals have their inalienable rights no less than the human animal; that it is wicked to enslave horses, dogs, camels, elephants, reindeer, etc., for his pleasure and service; that it is criminal to rob the cow of her milk and the hen of her egg, thus defrauding the calf and preventing the life of the chick; that it is a shameful abuse of superior power to interfere in any way with that mode of life to which the nature of each animal impels it.

All philosophic heathens will recognise that my plan is

make man (for theory), and man makes circumstances (for practice). Or, man is the creature of circumstance, and circumstance is the creature of man. Thus the perfect circle is complete, to spin merrily (with my impulse and guidance) along the railroad of progress unto the not very distant terminus of Heaven-upon-Earth. I may add that this circular form of doctrine (which is by no means uncommon) has the great advantage of being refutation-tight against ordinary opponents, who in attacking either clause, confirm the other. It can only be attacked wholesale from the position (whether tenable or untenable, it concerns us not here to inquire) that circumstances and man do not act at all on each other. I strongly advise every young disputant to take special care, and make sure, that one half of his speech or essay thoroughly contradicts the other; so that when his adversaries overwhelm either wing, he can bring up its fellow with the triumphant retort, You are only stealing my own arguments.

consonant with the great heathen precept, Know thyself; for this precept, like most others which are really valuable, is not great in its literal rudimentary self, but in its legitimate organic development. As our cool friend Goethe well remarks (*Maximen und Reflexionen*, Section 6), it is not to be taken in an ascetic sense, it has nothing to do with the morbid self-introspection of our modern hypochondriacs and valetudinarians, it is quite simple and practical. There is but poor comfort in knowing one's self as one is now, weak, unclean, foolish, generally imperfect, on very bad terms with nature and his fellows: the oracle meant that such knowledge should sting one into improving and perfecting himself; and when one has become perfect, to know himself will be sublime self-satisfaction. And as in our scheme all are to become perfect, each will enjoy this self-satisfaction not egotistically, but in heartiest sympathy with all others. Know thyself, how imperfect; hence, perfect thyself; finally, know thyself, how perfect, and the conscious perfection shall be thy beatitude.

The various Temperance Societies (as have strangely christened themselves the various Abstinence Societies, which very discreetly, in order to make sure of exterminating Intemperance, not only kill it but castrate the Temperance that might engender it) will be sure that the new perfect man will never abuse either alcoholic liquors or anything else in the world, and will not use at all what he had better refrain from altogether. For it is really too absurd to imagine a being with the human nature improved out of him, and a divine nature improved into him, getting drunk and disorderly, starving his children, beating his wife, fighting the police; and it is, in fact, absurd to imagine that any police would be required in a community of such beings.

The Vegetarians may confidently reckon that the new perfect man will not kill and devour other animals, nay, will

not kill and devour vegetables, if it is cruel and wrong to do so. Should he after serious moral reflection conclude that vegetable life is as sacred as animal, he will doubtless be clever enough to derive plenty of wholesome food from the mineral kingdom; and should he deem it wrong to ravage even this for so vulgar a purpose as filling his belly, he will doubtless be able to nourish himself without devouring anything at all.

All sincere politicians, radicals, republicans, conservatives, royalists, may be sure that the new perfect man will destroy in polity all that ought to be destroyed, will conserve and establish all that ought to be conserved and established.

The worshippers of Mumbo Jumbo, ultramontanes, ritualists, spiritualists, can have no doubt that the new perfect man will adore and believe whoever and whatever ought to be adored and believed.

In fine, every one who has faith that his own doctrine is true and his own plan of life good, must have faith that the better and wiser men become, the more will they believe his doctrine and adopt his plan of life.

Thus we are justified in assuming that all the best men of all creeds and parties, the very flower of humanity, will certainly join the Universal Perfection Company, Unlimited, as soon as they have had the opportunity of studying and mastering its veracious and modest prospectus.

VI.

STRENGTHENED in the very beginning of its career by accessions so numerous and powerful, and wielding irresistible might by the perfection of each of its members in contrast with the enormous imperfection of unregenerate men, the Universal Perfection Company, Unlimited, will certainly in

the course of a very few years predominate in all the regions of the earth, not only among the tribes termed barbarous, but also among the nations we pleasantly call civilised. When it is thus become more potent in itself than all the rest of mankind, it will probably feel bound to decide at once which of two courses of conduct it ought to adopt as the better for the true interests of the world and the human race: whether the Company shall bear with the stolid and stubborn imperfect men, hoping to win them and their children gradually to self-perfection, or at worst leaving them to die out gradually as an inferior race; or whether the Company shall promptly exterminate them. If this latter course be chosen, we may anticipate that a plain and kindly warning to the following effect, will be brought to the notice of all the recusants:—"Whereas, in despite of the example and counsel of the members of this Company, certain obdurate human creatures persist in their imperfection; and whereas the existence of such creatures is necessarily a misery to themselves and others, and those of them who do not feel this misery must be the most wretched of all, as debased to the level of their actual lot; and whereas such diseased and foul creatures cannot but poison our atmosphere, polluting our young purity and infecting our scarcely established health; and whereas, moreover, the existence of such creatures doth not only afflict with sore affliction and shame the souls of the perfect who must witness their obscene vileness, but doth degrade Humanity now first rising and in part risen to its due eminence: We the members of this Company, both jointly and severally, being overfilled with love and compassion for these poor worthless creatures who were lately our fellowmen, and yearning continually with fraternal yearnings for their salvation, do hereby most tenderly and earnestly entreat them to leave forthwith their loathsome sin and misery, and unite with us in the beatitude of per-

fection: And furthermore, notice is hereby given unto all whom it may concern, that this Company, moved by profound pity for such of these creatures as are incurable, and constrained by its solemn duty to the Universe and Humanity, hath resolved and will with unfailing exactitude execute the resolution (and therefore all those to whom it shall apply); That whoever of human kind hath not ere the expiration of (say) one year from this date performed upon himself either the simple perfecting process, which is incomparably the best *hari-kari* or happy despatch, or else that other happy despatch known as honourable suicide, which is incomparably better than continuance of base life, shall be then happily despatched by this Company, in order that the world in general and himself in particular may be promptly and thoroughly delivered from his evil and misery." One would fain trust that a pleading and warning conceived in a spirit so affectionate, and embodied in the consummate eloquence which will characterise everything spoken or written in the name of the Company, must persuade even the most obdurate to self-reform: as it would certainly persuade all those who in pure modesty shrank from becoming perfect, to depart uncompelled from a world in which their life was shown to be noxious. And one can safely affirm beforehand that it would indeed be a good riddance of bad rubbish to put speedily out of existence all wretches to whom such an appeal proved ineffectual. It is moreover quite clear that a minority composed of similar wretches, or even a large majority, could only offer the most puny resistance to a majority, or even a very small minority, of men all perfect. It is to be remarked that I do not venture to suggest that the Company is likely to choose the one course rather than the other, to exterminate rather than tolerate, or tolerate rather than exterminate the incorrigible. If it has to make the choice, it will doubtless

select that which is really preferable, and which will the sooner secure the universal perfection of humanity.

When every human being on the earth is thus perfect, evil in the senses of vice, sin, crime, error, folly, impurity, disease, deformity, ugliness, will be extinguished or nearly extinguished from among mankind; and with evil a large part of misery in the sense of pain or suffering will no doubt disappear. The immaculate goodness and infallible wisdom of the new men will likewise, beyond doubt, remedy or avoid many of the sufferings to which nature now subjects us, and which we account inevitable and incurable. But, so far as we can see, so long as the present laws and constitution of nature continue there must still remain a vast amount of really inevitable suffering for mankind, without reckoning beastkind, birdkind, fishkind, insectkind, reptilekind, plantkind, and leaving quite out of discussion stonekind. Storm and earthquake, landslip and flood, lightning and volcanic eruption will probably injure or slay these perfect men, though not so frequently as us. Their exquisite sense of justice will be keenly outraged, I fancy, by those iniquitous inequalities in the universe which I have touched upon in the second section of this wonderful treatise. Child-bearing may continue painful to mothers and discommodious to fathers; teething may still be a troublesome process alike to infants and parents. These new men, naturally enjoying life much more than we can, may demand either to live for ever or to live at any rate as long as they please; for it is ignominious to be pushed forcibly out of the world at an uncertain moment, whether one would like to stay longer or not. I think, too, that the decay from the grand climacteric into old age, with its weakness, torpor, senility, and general Struldbrugism, will by no means suit them, and that they will prefer to live out their life to the last minute (in case they are content to have a last minute) in full vigour of

mind and body. They will scarcely brook confinement to this petty earth of ours, but will want to roam at pleasure through the limitless universe. I think that their generous souls will be wrought to indignation by the condition and prospects of the inferior creatures. In the complex relations between nature and human nature, there are innumerable other matters with regard to which the perfect men will probably require more or less important change, as the meditative reader will easily discover for himself.

Let me here touch upon but one more point, which is rather interesting at the present time. When all social, political, religious, moral, intellectual, and other distinctions have been done away with, is it probable that these perfect human beings will allow nature to violate decency and thorough equality by perpetuating the gross distinctions of sex? Imperfect as we still are, our most advanced thinkers have already arrived at the doctrine of the absolute equality of man and woman, tempered perhaps by some vague superiority on the female side; and already our cultivated moral delicacy, our refined spirituality, our exquisite modesty, our ethereal chastity, are ashamed of things so coarse and carnal and obscene as these sexual distinctions. We dare not allude to them publicly, except in the most distant and evasive fashion; society placidly ignores them, men and women alike being supposed utterly ignorant of each other's bodily form, and extremely unwilling to learn anything on the subject; legislation puts a triple bandage on the eyes of justice (completely blindfolded, if not blind, already) whenever they are in question; religion fears and hates them as the chief organs of the filthy and damnable lusts of the flesh. As in the meanwhile, under all this veiling and ignoring in the world of pretences, the said distinctions are as vigorous and influential as ever in the world of facts (nature with reckless immodesty continuing to produce them now just as

she did in the old licentious times, ere nude statues were made decent with figleaves and the naked truth presentable with cant), the actual results may be summed up in that great sad word of William Blake, which sums up so much of our actual life: "Prisons are built with stones of law; brothels with bricks of religion." In order to ensure absolute equality (which perchance cannot co-exist with essential distinctions) the new race may demand either that sex be abolished, or that every human being be of both sexes. Perhaps the very perfecting process will either unsex or androgynise its subject, so that all alike shall be regenerated either neutral or epicene. But if in their new birth they remain and consent to continue respectively male and female, they will doubtless openly and honourably recognise these distinctions of sex; so that what is now in public ignored, and in private spoken of basely and obscenely, shall be then both in public and private spoken of with joyous and noble frankness; and what is now in great part prostituted to ignoble emotions and degrading companionship, shall be then hallowed by the ardent chastity of free and natural love.

VII.

BUT will change of the laws and constitution of the world be feasible? Can even perfect men persuade or compel nature to improve and perfect herself into thorough unison with their requirements? I am not only convinced that they can, but I am able to show that the change is quite practicable even to our poor understandings; and everybody will surely allow that what is proved practicable to us must be mere child's play to the new men.

The first question is, To whom or what should reformed Humanity address the summons for the instant reformation

of the universe? to Fate, Law, Chance, the Gods, or Nature herself?

Not to Fate, for it is blind, dumb, deaf, inexorable; and moreover all our modern philosophy ignores or contemns it, and the palatial edifice of this my system is built upon the foundation of its tomb.

Not to Law, for it is impotent, being the mere creature of the things that seem to obey it. Nor can it change, for it perishes in mutation; and change of it must come from what is above or beyond it. And yet though it cannot alter, it always manages to range itself on the side which has proved victorious, graciously sanctioning all that has been done, and which by the leagued universe cannot be undone. It may be disregarded altogether with perfect safety.

Not to Chance, for it cannot be relied upon; its caprices confound all the mathematics of probabilities and baffle the wildest hazards of guess. It is altogether too frivolous for the serious consideration of wise men who deal with cause and effect or steady-going unphilosophical sequence, and march firmly through logical premises booted with because and therefore.

Not to the Gods, though at first one might think there would be hope in them, for their devotees assure us that they are all-good and all-powerful, and that they love to grant the prayers of the righteous. But there are so many of them and so diverse, and they hate each other so intensely, that no plan of world-reformation could ever be agreed upon, much less carried out, by them. And, besides, it is possible, and perchance even probable, that the new perfect men will have no Gods or God at all.

It seems likely, therefore, that the momentous appeal will have to be made direct to Nature herself, still known to a few as the mighty mother, but to more as the cruel and stingy stepmother, while the vast majority see in her

but the lowly fostermother or menial nurse of our royal selves the glorious children of mankind; conceited and thankless little brats, who defame the womb which bore us and the breasts which gave us suck. The new men will know well in what character to regard her. To Her the living reality, and not to the gods or other shadowy supreme powers, will the summons be addressed; for as the sage poet chants ("Faerie Queene;" Mutabilitie, vii. 5):—

> "Then forth issew'd (great goddess) great Dame Nature,
> With goodly port and gracious majesty,
> Being far greater and more tall of stature
> Than any of the gods or powers on high."

If she accords at once with a good grace all that the perfect men demand, all will at once be well both for them and for herself. But if she resolves to continue in her old ways, and will not be persuaded by their filial pleadings, they can resort to affectionate constraint, as in the case of their incorrigible human brothers, delicately discussed in Section VI. And as these perfect men will be perfect in unanimity and resolution, there can be no rational doubt of their speedy triumph, as I will now triumphantly prove.

Uncertain as are most things about which we freely dogmatise, it is quite certain, and indeed an axiomatic truth well known and understood by all civilised people, that man (including of course woman and the children) is the very crown and head of nature; that he is so at present, whether or not destined so to continue for ever. I need not dwell on a proposition so obvious to the clear and impartial human intelligence. Buzzard and ass may be unaware of it, each fondly fancying itself the supreme model form of life, the true final cause and object of the world's existence; but we men know better. We know that all the other offspring of nature aspire and point to man, and are in him

alone fully developed; though it is true that he cannot swim like frog or grampus, nor fly like midge or wildgoose. We know that all her other works are consecrated with the celestial stamp of use solely in relation to him and his flourishing life; the chief end of sun, moon, stars, air, ocean, and earth, being to serve man and glorify him, perhaps for ever. Without him, nature would be a fruitless stem, an arch wanting its key-stone, a palace untenanted (we don't count as tenants the rats and mice and such small deer), a discrowned queen, a headless trunk. All this is well known to civilised people, but the most important inferences to be drawn from it are very little known, for man has been hitherto, and still remains, an animal timid and inconsequent in ratiocination.

In the first place, it is clear that since man is the head of nature, to cut off him would be to decapitate her. It may be true that she is a sort of hydra, having had several successive heads; and that unless man perfects himself, as I here urge and implore him, he will be eventually superseded by a better, or at least a stronger head: but the one head has not fallen off suddenly, and the next suddenly sprung up in its place; each change has occupied a vast period of time, the one head slowly giving way while the other as slowly came to the front, as in the case of children's first and second teeth, as in the sloughing of snakes and the moulting of birds. On the other hand, it may be true, as nearly all of us modestly assume, that man is the last if not the only head of nature, so that in losing him she would be as an adult losing a tooth, who finds no other grow to replace it. The adult, indeed, may procure an artificial tooth; but who ever heard of an artificial head effectively fulfilling the functions of a natural one? And, moreover, the essential character of nature renders it impossible for her to be in anything artificial. We are therefore entitled to

conclude that cutting off the human race suddenly would kill nature by beheading her; for either she would have absolutely no other head, even in germ, or the head meant to supply its place would as yet exist only in embryo and be quite unfit for duty; and we cannot conceive a being so highly organised as nature continuing to live without a head, either for ever or during a period of interregnum between the premature fall of the one and the arrival at maturity of the other.

But the one ruling passion and principle of nature is surely her love of life; as the true proverb runs, Self-preservation is the first law of nature. Supreme is she in philoprogenitiveness, that is to say, in the love not so much of progeny as of generating. She spawns perpetually, and by millions and billions, producing unscrupulously myriads of imperfect types for one that is perfect, devouring indifferently and wholesale the perfect and the imperfect in order to produce faster and more abundantly; all that we term death being but her swift process of securing material to be worked up into ever fresh forms of life. So limitless and, from our point of view, improvident is her lust of procreation, that we may well deem it rather a fierce monomania than a ruling principle. The one thing, therefore, which she most abhors and shrinks from must be death absolute, the death of herself, the termination of the continually active quasi-birth and quasi-death which constitute her continually active life, her eternal being which is eternal becoming.

Seeing, therefore, that the sudden destruction of mankind would kill nature, and that she intensely and monomaniacally loves her own life, the conclusion is manifest that she would do anything and everything short of self-murder, in order to avoid the premature extinction of our species. And from this inexpugnable proposition I draw the fateful practical

corollary, *That the human race, so long as no other is ready to supersede it, can compel nature to do what it pleases, by resolving on instant universal suicide in case of her refusal.* In all modesty, and without the slightest disrespect for preceding and contemporary sages (who if they have taught us but little, have at anyrate taught all they knew, and in fact a good deal more), I believe myself justified in affirming that this is beyond measure the most important law of nature discoverable by man; and that its discovery, which gives him the simplest and easiest of formulas for working instantaneously the perfection of the universe, must ever remain unique in eternal and infinite beneficence. And I must not omit to add that this formula is not only unique, by the unlimited good results of its (infallibly) successful application, but is characterised by such prodigal superabundance of goodness, that even in case of failure (which our sovereign human intelligence declares impossible) its application would benefit mankind immensely more than they ever have been or are ever likely to be benefited by anything else. It is a medicine which if it could fail in working the perfect cure, must yet do more good to the patient than all the rest of the pharmacopœia. For suppose that we resolve on instant wholesale suicide if nature refuses to perfect herself, and (the impossible case) that nature does refuse, and we have forthwith to carry out our resolution: can any thoughtful and conscientious man, candidly considering our state and that of the world (perfection being supposed unattainable), doubt that such universal suicide would be the one best and most beatific action we could perform for ourselves and our (potential) posterity and our world in general? Lest the fascinated reader should make away with himself hurriedly and for inappropriate reasons (while appropriate ones too surely abound), as Cleombrotus in a fine frenzy threw himself to death in the sea after studying the *Phædo*,

I call special attention to the fact that it is only our *universal* suicide which would prove a panacea for all the ills our flesh is heir to; individual suicides can do little or no good, save to the individuals themselves. Thus true philosophers may rationally and generously deny themselves the luxury of self-murder, because their death must leave the human average still worse than it is; and, besides, death's coming is so certain and (at farthest) so near, that it is scarcely worth while to put one's self out of breath hastening to meet him.

Men have been hitherto so imperfect in intelligence, that they have not been fully aware of this, their immense reserve of compelling power; and so imperfect in will, that even if fully aware thereof, they could not unanimously have carried and carried out the requisite resolution. Yet there seems always to have existed some obscure and confused consciousness of such really miraculous power over nature; while (in the blessed order of Providence) it was reserved for the present luminous writer, in the present illustrious age, to discover and formulate with comprehensive precision the sublime law of this power. All the old traditions of supernatural magic and miracles; the loftiest rhapsodies of mysticism in all climes and ages, the trances of seers, the ecstasies of philosophers, the rapturous influxes and effluxes of saints; the nirvana of Buddhism, the faith of Jesus which could move mountains, and to which nothing was impossible (faith being the favourite abracadabra of Jesus, just as perfection is mine); the celibacy, self-mortification, self-mutilation, rage for martyrdom, common to Brahminism, Buddhism, and Christianity, and probably to all religions; the austere Stoicism of Greece and Rome; the much-decried bloodthirstiness of famous conquerors, who magnanimously took upon themselves the useful and onerous task of extinguishing by myriads their ignoble fellow-men; all

these point to some dim intuition of the supreme truth I have just demonstrated, as in all the mode of subduing nature is by suppression and destruction of humanity. But nature could not and cannot ever be constrained into self-improvement by sporadic or even endemic or epidemic cases of slow or swift suicide and slaughter, so long as the premature extinction of the whole human race was not and is not seriously threatened. Threaten this seriously, and she will forthwith become our most obedient humble servant. This is the forcible plan of "strikes" by labour against capital, applied in its utmost extension by man against nature; as you have already mere trades'-unions, organise a universal Man-union, and threaten, if all your demands are not immediately granted, to "strike" living, to "turn out" of human existence, and you will at once bring the everlasting employer to reason.

And if man even in his present state is the very crown and head of nature, think what a crown and head he will be when perfect, when divine! I can scarcely imagine that she will then have the heart to refuse him anything. Should she, however, prove obdurate to the first courteous and affectionate appeal of the new men, they can deliver to her the dreadful *ultimatum:* Immediate compliance with all we ask (which we ask for your good no less than for our own), or we immediately all kill ourselves, thus beheading you. And she, knowing their inexorable resolution, must straightway yield, and perfect herself as they require; and in the maternal and general feminine fashion love them all the more for thus absolutely dominating her.

And thus in the course of not many years (let us make a liberal allowance for mischances and unforeseen obstacles, and say by the beginning of the twentieth century, which is nearly thirty years hence), evil will be extinct by the perfection of man, and misery by the perfection of nature, and

everybody will be thoroughly good and happy everywhere for evermore. Q.E.D.

VIII.

I CANNOT conclude this essay, which contains the quintessential results of my most earnest and profound meditations through a long series of years, without apologising to mankind in case its extreme brevity renders it in any respect obscure. Being obliged to compress into a few of these pages a mass of inestimable matter which would have very well filled two or three bulky volumes, I have done my best to put the main principles in the clearest light; but I am only too well aware that many considerations of interest and importance, which might have greatly facilitated the study and comprehension of the whole scheme, exemplifying its harmonious rational beauty and obviating specious objections, have been altogether omitted for lack of space. For one such consideration I must make room here.

Coleridge says somewhere that in his experience the most pregnant of proverbs is the well-known paradoxical one, Extremes meet; and on this point my experience decidedly confirms that of Coleridge. Thus in ending my treatise I naturally revert to its beginning, where I seemed to speak somewhat lightly of those deep philosophers who go down mining and burrowing through the bottom of the bottomless pit in search of the origin of evil. For it may be very plausibly urged on their behalf, that it is impossible to extinguish evil until the origin thereof has been discovered and destroyed. This great river of human Time (rivers were expressly created to feed metaphors, allegories, and navigable canals) which comes flowing down thick with filth and blood from the immemorial past, surely cannot be thoroughly cleansed by any purifying process applied to it here in the

present; for the pollution, if not in its very source (supposing it has a source), or deriving from unimaginable remotenesses of eternity indefinitely beyond its source, at any rate interfused with it countless ages back, and is perennial as the river itself. This immense poison-tree of Life, with its leaves of illusion, blossoms of delirium, apples of destruction, surely cannot be made wholesome and sweet by anything we may do to the branchlets and twigs on which, poor insects, we find ourselves crawling, or to the leaves and fruit on which we must fain feed; for the venom is drawn up in the sap by the taproots plunged in abysmal depths of the past. This toppling and sinking house wherein we dwell cannot be firmly re-established, save by re-establishing from its lowest foundation upwards. In fine, *To thoroughly reform the present and the future, we must thoroughly reform the past.* Far be it from me to deny this essential truth, which I have so long recognised as one of the first laws of practical and speculative moral philosophy. But the fallacy in the argument of these origin of evil explorers consists in the assumption, that in order to root out evil we must necessarily first discover the root; and, generally, that in order to destroy anything we must know where and what is its origin. Now, there is no absolute necessity for such knowledge in such cases, though it is as a rule very helpful and much to be desired. Do we not every day destroy myriads of animalculæ without being aware of it, or knowing anything of the nature and origin of the poor creatures destroyed? And it is plain that without knowing the precise position and character of the root of a plant, but believing it to be at the foot of the stem, and judging that there is no solution of continuity from top to bottom, one may extirpate the plant by pulling at the stem; and thus the discovery of the root will be the consequence, and not the antecedent, of the eradication. And thus will it be in this case. For I can deliberately and

fearlessly affirm that *The dual perfecting process herein proposed will, in fact, in its instantaneous plenipotentiality, reform and perfect the whole past as thoroughly as the whole future.* The house wherein we dwell will be re-edified from its lowest foundation; the tree of Life will be made sweet and wholesome to and from the utmost extremities of the roots that strike deepest into antiquity; the river of human Time will be purified throughout its whole length to and from its immemorial source. This assertion may at first seem rather mysterious and paradoxical, but its truth will become comprehensible when it has been strictly meditated, and grow fulgently obvious in the light of the experience of the perfect men in the perfect world. To this experience, now so close at hand, I confidently appeal.

As a metaphysician, I would naturally prefer to exhaust this subject (and the reader) by an elaborate dissertation; but as a practical moral reformer, anxious to get the weight of the whole wicked world off my mind, I dare not linger to indulge in this intellectual luxury. I will merely observe that mysteries and paradoxes abound in life and nature: we are suckled on incomprehensibilities, and irreconcilable contradictions are our daily food. Nay, they abound even in the exact sciences, though these are all made out of man's own head, as the children say. In common arithmetic he rules that decimal one repeating is equal to one-ninth, while he knows that however far produced it must still remain less than this vulgar fraction. In geometry he starts with the self-contradictory definition that a point is position without magnitude; and only arrives at important truths concerning parallel lines, by assuming as an axiom that certain lines will converge, while the best geometers have vainly puzzled themselves in attempts to demonstrate the fact. In algebra and the higher mathematics he works with negative signs, surds, imaginary roots, with infinite series and infinitesimals, which

metaphysically baffle human comprehension. In all these cases, as in ordinary life, the useful and practically trustworthy results are the real and sufficient justification and verification of the paradox and mystery; for antinomy is the deepest law of the universe, in so far as we can at present discern. And such verification, as I have already pointed out, my statement will have in the experience of those who have performed the perfecting process. So much for philosophers: as for the Christians and other religionists, they who have banqueted on contradictions and revelled in mysteries, which never have been or can be practically verified or made useful, will no doubt be enraptured to find a little sweet puzzlement, a slight savour and relish of apparent impossibility, a gentle exhilaration of provisional faith, amidst the austere feast of reason and sober flow of soul of this perfect system of universal reform.

IX.

And now should any admiring reader ask why I, the present writer, have not already performed upon myself the simple perfecting process so lucidly expounded, and thus made myself the unique germ in practice as well as theory of the universal reformations herein proposed, I beg to inform him or her that I am by nature exceedingly quiet and modest; that I shrink from engrossing all the honour and glory to myself, as well as transgressing the great modern rule of the division of labour, by both planning and working out the plan; that I am at present quite weak and ill, having (as will be readily believed) exhausted and in fact nearly killed myself with intense meditation in the stupendous task of elaborating these Proposals; that by commercial usage or etiquette (for which I have extreme reverence) the promoter of a company always keeps himself with

touching self-abnegation in the background, giving unto others the glorification of seeing their names in print as directors and miscellaneous officials, and unto others leaving the felicity of being registered as subscribing shareholders, and taking his own shares (issued as fully paid up) and other remuneration in the most modest and retiring manner, so modestly indeed that he usually consents to have his own name quite suppressed in the transactions, and allows the name of some one else to be flourished in its stead. And furthermore I confess that the tortures and indignities to which in these days celebrated men are subject, both while living and when dead, have so horrified me, that I immensely prefer the most ignoble obscurity to the most noble reputation. For while alive the famous man has neither peace nor privacy, being the common property of all the idle busybodies and malicious or foolish newsmongers who may care to seize on him, destroying his comfort and devastating his time. And when dead his case is even worse. The repose of the tomb is no repose for him. Lecturers lecture on him, preachers preach on him; biographers serve him up in butter and treacle, or in acrid vinegar, to a lickerous and palled public, exposing all his weaknesses, follies, misfortunes, errors, and defects. *Punch* has ready waiting for him the framework of a lot of long verses, like a row of very dismal coffins; and if by dint of tugging, thrusting, wrenching, knotting, mutilating, squeezing, jamming, and heavy hard hammering, his virtues and achievements can be possibly crushed into the said coffins and nailed down fast, the implacable *Punch* will so crush and nail them. The *Telegraph* incontinently gushes over him a eulogy so rancidly unctuous, that in several cases (as we have been credibly assured) the corpse of the victim thus lubricated has turned and vomited its heart up in the grave. His bust may be set up sleekly fatuous in some hall; his

statue be cast forth into the open air, a lump of ugliness ever growing grimier in fellowship with King Georges and royal dukes. And worst of all, his spirit is at the beck of the mediums. Sludge (Browning so thoroughly vivisected this animal that it ought to be dead, but your low organisms are very tenacious of life, and it lives and grows fat as before), with Budge, Drudge, Grudge, Scrudge, Smudge, thereto one Judge and whole tribes of Rudge and Fudge, all and any of the males and females of the sweet sect, may make him come to them when they list, to play imbecile antics and utter idiotic lies. Ah, better be a mortal baboon or skunk, toad or cuttle-fish, any mortal thing however base and obscene, than a famous immortal human soul on these terms! Poor Shakespeare dreaded that his dust might be digged, and cursed the man who should move his bones; but his soul he thought secure from outrage, commending it into the hands of God, to be made partaker of life everlasting, as we read in the first clause of his will. And now his soul, instead of being in the hands of God, is in the hands of Sludge; and has to spend a large portion of its existence in making a greater fool of itself than it ever made of Dogberry or Shallow, a greater liar of itself than it ever made of Pistol or Parolles, all for the profit of Fudge and the hysterical wonder of Rudge; and as the *sédnces* are so numerous, and are now held in all degrees of latitude and longitude, and its name is so popular, it is never safe at any hour from being summoned to these vile buffooneries, and no doubt is often enacting them in a dozen different places at the same time. It was well worth while to live fifty years, to write Hamlet, Lear, Othello, Macbeth, in order to earn this sublime posthumous doom! May the Lord in his infinite mercy keep me from becoming a celebrity! The additional terrors of death for men of renown are grown so appalling, that soon only brazen impudence,

stolid obtuseness, rabid vanity will dare to face them. Men really great will stifle their energies, rusting and perishing unknown and unuseful, rather than run the risk of glory, and the world will have none but little men active, if this state of things be not shortly put an end to; and herein appears yet another powerful argument for the instant acceptance of these proposals. But as these proposals (as I have shown) can certainly, and will probably, be effectuated in about thirty years, it may be considered that these tortures and degradations of the famous should not be so much dreaded by me, for they will undoubtedly be extinguished in the universal extinction of evil and misery. And this consideration is indeed reasonable, but my loathing and horror are as yet too intense to be soothed by the calm voice of reason; and therefore, even if I had just now the requisite health, energy and ambition, I could not put myself personally in evidence by announcing myself with full name, address and occupation, as the prototype of human perfection, the first member of the provisional committee for the establishment of the Universal Perfection Company, Unlimited.

But I hereby cheerfully promise and pledge myself that as soon as I am informed and convinced that the aforesaid provisional committee is duly constituted and at work, I will qualify myself for membership; and, having forwarded my contribution with name, address and occupation (should I be then fortunate enough to have the last two), will do my utmost for the furtherance of the good cause; only for ever carefully concealing my identity with the author of these proposals, and leaving the whole glory thereof to the pair of impersonal and interchangeable capital letters hereunto subscribed ["B. V."]. And with the prospect of such membership, I do now put by as a sacred deposit the amount of the unit of contribution (while hoping that when the good time

comes I may be able to contribute more), that is to say, twopence ha'penny, in good and lawful money of this realm as I verily believe; and the twopence ha'penny hallowed to this purpose, is now and henceforth until that purpose is fulfilled, to be a first lien upon my estate, having priority even over the half-a-crown hereinbefore alienated in certain contingencies, as specified in Section III.; and I do most devoutly pray that I may never by extreme need be constrained to part with the said sacrosanct deposit or any portion thereof until the aforesaid committee of perfect men be ready to receive me.

And now from my inmost soul, and with that intensely earnest anxiety which springs from intense love and compassion for my kind, do I admonish the whole Human Race that if it will not in good time carry out the two simple reforms I have explained, and thus constitute itself the everlasting consummation of the perfect cosmic life, it will assuredly in process of time become extinct, having fulfilled its æon; for every species and genus of imperfect creatures has its limited period no less than every imperfect individual, the perfect only being eternal; and thus either Nature will perish with it, as imperfect herself, or she surviving, another and superior race will supersede it, and grow indestructible by growing perfect, or in turn yield to yet another and still superior race.

But I cannot think so badly of my species and so tragically of its doom, as to believe that it will persistently reject beatification, and prefer ignoble extinction to eternal supremacy; and I have therefore little or no doubt that ere this glorious nineteenth century be finished, these proposals will have been wholly or in great part realised, and the impersonal initials appended to them by their unknown author honoured far beyond my wish. I am well aware, however, that it is in the highest degree probable that the present

world of imperfect men will at first either totally neglect them, or only vouchsafe notice in obloquy and ribald mockery. For I have learnt from my very small reading in history (I generally prefer my fiction pure, as vended in novels and romances, without the adulteration of misunderstood facts and ridiculous pretensions to veracity), that when any one proposes something exceedingly injurious to a nation, as for instance an unjust war with another people, a Mississippi Scheme or a South Sea Bubble, he and his proposals are greeted with instant rapture by the very nation to be injured by them, and are not cursed until some time afterwards when the loss and damage they have caused are partially realised. And on the other hand, that when any one proposes something exceedingly beneficial to a country, such as a sorely needed reformation in religion or government, he is treated with the utmost contumely and derision, and perhaps even persecuted to death, and is not honoured and idolised until many years afterwards, when he is senile or dead, and when perhaps the tree he planted is already growing barren and an encumbrance to the ground. And if ordinary reformers are usually treated very badly at first, a reformer so extraordinary as myself must expect atrociously bad treatment indeed. Well might our tender-hearted sage exclaim, "O beloved brother blockheads of Mankind!"*

And what I have just noted is perhaps one of the principal verities couched in that deep proverb, which has puzzled not a few good brains: Truth is at the bottom of a well. One of the chief meanings, no doubt, as well as one of the most obvious, must be, as the simple sage opined, that if not drowned dead she is ready to kick the bucket. But every wise proverb or emblem involves countless good meanings for him who knows how to evolve them. And

* Carlyle: *French Revolution;* Vol. III. Book I. Chap vii. "O shrieking beloved brother blockheads of mankind, &c.—"

this one, if I err not grossly in my interpretation, would express the encouraging fact that he who dares to evoke and try to assist the said Truth out of the said well, is sure to get thoroughly drenched with very cold water, and may reckon himself uncommonly lucky if not dragged in and drowned.

Yet I with unperturbed fortitude and rooted confidence await the morning when I shall read in the *Times*, rechristened the *Eternities* (for Truth may lie at the bottom of the ink-well of the journalist, though he very rarely dips deep enough to fish her up if she does) the authentic announcement that the provisional committee of one or more perfect persons has commenced operations. In the meanwhile I often wonder who will commence the reformation with himself, who is to be the happy man that will first make himself divine. As poor Alfred de Musset cried ("Rolla" I.), Who of us, Who of us is about to become a God?

Qui de nous, qui de nous va devenir un Dieu?

But if no one will take this initiative, if (as I cannot believe) mankind and the world persist to the end in their wretched and evil imperfection, I at least am free from blame; I have meditated, expounded, demonstrated, implored and exhorted, until my strength is worn out and my health perhaps ruined; the responsibility of the damnation of Man and Nature will not rest on me. I can wash the hands of brave endeavour in the water of absolution, and smoke the pipe of tranquillity on the cushion of a good conscience: for as our brave German kinsmen say (especially when, after beating the enemy, they have requisitioned a jolly dinner and are billeted to a luxurious bed), A good conscience is a soft pillow—*Ein gutes Gewissen ist ein sanftes Kissen.* And remaining thus in a sublime minority of one (as remaineth eternally the most dread Lord God of

monotheism), I can administer unto myself the consolation of that blessed truth which Cacciaguida in Paradise administered to Dante (to Dante Durante, the long-enduring Giver), the supreme stoical truth for the honest and independent thinker: Well shall it be for thee, to have made thyself a party by thyself:

Sì ch'a te fia bello
Averti fatta parte per te stesso.

BUMBLE, BUMBLEDOM, BUMBLEISM.

1865.

—o—

We were all, I think, very much pleased when Mr. Matthew Arnold, not long ago, in his Essay on "Heinrich Heine," in the *Cornhill Magazine*, took occasion to tell us that we English are the most inaccessible to ideas of any people in Christendom. We were so pleased, not because of any novelty in the information, but because it was charming to be spoken to with such frankness by a scholar, a poet, a gentleman, and above all, an Oxford Professor, and because we all in our hearts detest and chafe at our universal submission to routine, just as we all hate the chimney-pot hat which yet we all wear. This essay of Mr. Arnold's, though admirable in spirit, does not render complete justice to Heine (and still less does another by the same author in the same *Magazine*, in which Heine is served up along with Theocritus and Saint Francis); but it certainly renders complete justice to our abjectness under the yoke of the commonplace. The essence of this inert commonplace and monotonous routine, Mr. Arnold recommends us to call by its German name, *Philistinism*, and its slaves *Philistines*.*

* By the by, Will Watch, the bold smuggler, in the song which is now well up in years, cries "The *Philistines* are down on us!" and Hogg, in

He remarks, fairly enough, that *respectable* is too valuable a word to be perverted into the scornful meaning with which Mr. Carlyle uses it; and that the common French term, *épicier*, is less apt and expressive than *Philistine*, while it also casts a slur upon a respectable class composed of living and susceptible members. I may add that the words *Snob* and *Snobbery*, which Thackeray pushed out into such broad significance, have too much of a sneer in them, imply too much of *conscious* hypocrisy, subserviency, and meanness; and that *Mrs. Grundy* is not general enough, being too closely related with the tea-table and mere scandal.

But Mr. Arnold seems to have quite forgotten that we have already denominations of our own—concrete singular and general, as well as abstract—better for us than the French, the Carlylese, or the German. These denominations head this paper: *Bumble*, *Bumbledom*, *Bumbleism*. In the first place, their very sound (and *sound* is of immense importance in a nickname), heavy, obese, rotund, a genuine John Bull mouthful of awkwardness, is far more consonant with their meaning than the sound of *respectable*, *épicier*, *snob*, *or Philistine;* (the German word *Philister* is in this respect superior to *Philistine*): and *Bumble*, moreover, is intimately allied with those most respectable and ancient English words, *grumble*, *stumble*, *mumble*, *jumble*, *fumble*, *rumble*, *crumble*, *tumble*, all heads of families of the very choicest middle-class blood in the language.

Secondly, and this consideration is decisive; we do not want the same word as the Germans, because we have not the same thing. Essentially "the humdrum people, slaves to routine, enemies to the light, stupid and oppressive, but at the same time very strong," are of the same nature in all

his "Life of Shelley" (Vol. I. p. xxviii.), quotes a letter written in 1824, wherein Sir Timothy is branded as *the old Philistine*. So Mr. Arnold is not correct in stating that we have not the term in English.

countries; but circumstances materially alter existence and character—above all, humdrum existence and character—so that their weapons, their modes of warfare, the things for which they fight, the objects of their devotion and detestation, their watchwords and battle-cries, are not the same in any two countries, and are very different indeed in England and on the continent. (I mean the *continent* generally, as represented by France, Prussia, Austria, Russia, and until lately Italy: the term continent is convenient, and quite accurate enough, for broad contrast with England.) There is as great unlikeness between a Philister and a Bumble, as between a continental *mouchard* and one of our detectives.

The Philistines, well so named on the continent, uphold the despotism of absolute governments, oppress the children of the light by brute force of armies and the yet more merciless machinery of bureaucracy and *espionnage*, imprison them in fortresses which disgrace our century, thrust them out into life-long exile, shoot or bayonet or strangle them in critical emergencies. I say that the Philistines do all these things, although many of them may be disapproved of by thousands of decent Philistines; but without the Philistines these things could not be done; the Philistines, by their selfish and stupid and cowardly passivity, empower the immediate agents to perpetrate these atrocities; the Philistines are the great dull block without which for a fulcrum the devil's lever could not act, the coiled worm by which the screw bites. Opposed to these, the continental children of the light, the men of ideas and aspirations, playing desperately for an enormous stake,—for liberty of speech, liberty of the press, and civil freedom, with imprisonment or exile or death as the forfeit if they lose—work by conspiracies, secret societies, insurrections, bloody revolutions, sometimes even by assassinations.

But here in Britain the warfare is not the same, the positions of the opponents and the stakes they contest being so different. Our enemies of the light no longer withhold from us the extreme necessaries, they withhold merely some of the comforts and many of the luxuries of intellectual and moral freedom. Liberty of speech, liberty of the press, and civic independence, we have. The great men who fronted Charles I. with the sword, and at last beheaded him with the axe, the small men who got William of Orange to shoulder James II. out of his palace, and then finessed his flight into an abdication; these fought and won for us the last really desperate and dangerous national battles with Philistinism, abased the strength of Goliath, broke his spear and shattered his armour, and left but a Bumble to bother us; Bumble who is by no means terrible, except as a "terrible bore." Our children of the light triumph by a Reform Bill (such triumph as it is! but the smaller the stakes the better for the players) or a repeal of the Corn Laws, not by a bloody Revolution. When they wish to rouse the people, they don't think of barricades, but write to and in the journals, have public dinners or public meetings without dinners, where they spout away to their hearts' content, get up petitions—to which, let us hope, the majority of the signatures are genuine, and, at length, push a Bill through Parliament. They are liable to the calumnies and contempt of "good society," but need have no fear of the fortress, the bullet, or the scaffold: and the hatred or contempt of society in general does not hurt them much, the fear of it is far worse than the reality; for their own particular society, the people among whom they live day and night, are full of admiration and enthusiasm.* Our

* A man's *world* consists simply of those people in whose society he spends most of his time. Very few feel acutely the opinions of classes outside these. One is apt to think that a *Mouravieff* should sink overwhelmed

carbonari are Freemasons who chiefly meet to eat and think to drink, or Benefit Society Odd Fellows and Foresters. Our *gendarmerie* are the county constabulary. Our *prêtraille* and *ultramontains* are rural clergy who vote against Jowett and Gladstone, Sabbatarians who shut up the Crystal Palace and the Museum on Sundays, Archdeacons who attack Colenso in Convocation, Oratorians with a mania for luring pretty girls to confession. The commonplace is really an immense burden on our backs in ordinary social and domestic life, and a heavier burden still in the more elevated intellectual and moral life; but it is not terrible, nor malignant, nor sanguinary; it is simply a very great bother and bore, and each man knows quite well that he can throw off its yoke whenever he has the necessary courage. In brief, it is Bumble and not Goliath who oppresses us. It would be easy to pursue the contrast through a multitude of details, but I think that these are sufficient for a clear understanding. One is surprised that it never seems to have occurred to a writer so thoughtful and careful as Mr. Matthew Arnold.

In his public official capacity we all know Bumble, with the great gold-laced hat, the ample scarlet cloak, the wand of awful power. He is portly and of good stature; a little weazened Bumble is an abomination, an imposture. His fat face is dignified by the repose of a solemn disdain of

under the execrations of Christendom: not at all; he is naturally surrounded by a staff of officials likeminded with himself, and their talk is for him the expression of public opinion. I once saw two poor women enter a public-house, clad in those thin colourless bits of stuff that our poor elderly women wear, and with such flowers in their shapeless bonnets as showed that even flowers can be unlovely. The one had agreed to "stand" a quartern or half-quartern of gin, but had to borrow a penny from the other for the accomplishment of this generous act. In their talk they happened to discuss the plans and prospects of a son of the liberal lady, and I heard her answer some suggestion of her companion with an "Ah, it *might* be better: *but then what would the world say!*" Poor old dame, with thy world of a back-court! to thee of more account (nor to the Universe of less) than court of greatest king or kaiser.

thought, though the ruddiness of his complexion and the likeness of his nose to an over-mature strawberry reveal that he can be jolly in private life. He hath an immense genius of inertia (quite the most useful genius in this troubled world); so that the weariness of the immeasurable hours, by which so many weaklings are driven desperate into all sorts of dissipation and mischief, cannot prevail over him; stolidly patient and firm as a pyramid—whose head is so narrow and whose base is so broad—he endureth and repulseth the long assaults of time. His carriage is erect, and he moves with slow pomp, for well he knoweth that he is a chief pillar of the state, and that there is not an institution in the realm more ancient and honourable than he. For he is more truly essential to the sanctity of the cathedral than the Dean himself, more necessary to the stability of the bank than are the chairman and all the other directors. His reverence for the rich and powerful is in exact ratio to his scorn for the poor and mean. His low bows and elaborate subservience to the Alderman are gracefully rounded off by the smart tap which he letteth fall upon the head of the charity urchin; in the former, he signeth himself in large letters "Bumble," in the latter he putteth a fair flourish to this signature. He reverences the rich because they *are* rich; and because people get rich by leading model lives, by being through many years frugal, industrious, sober, discreet, and orthodox. He scorns the poor because they *are* poor, because poverty is odious in itself; and because, if indeed it is not a crime in itself, it is at any rate the fruit and symbol of vice, the outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual disgrace; for people get poor by being reckless, improvident, lazy, dissolute, enthusiastic, heterodox, and generally by flying in the face of the world.

Bumble as Beadle is Bumble in his most perfect official

manifestation, but he is by no means limited to this office so ancient and honourable and useful. He has filled, and he now fills, and for years and generations to come he will fill, a large proportion of the highest and best-paid offices in the State, the Army, the Navy, and a large majority of those in the Court, the Press, and the Church. What, indeed, is the union of Church and State—glorious and happy union, on which we can never enough felicitate our noble selves !—but a grand national homage and tribute to Bumbleism ? a wise provision of cosy stalls, lawn sleeves, shovel-hats, gaiters, benefices, pluralities, princely sees, for multitudes of deserving little Bumbles ?

And while Bumble is pre-eminently Beadle in his public incapacity ; in private life he is more richly developed and more easily studied when of the standing of a Churchwarden (the French *Marguillier*). It is the same Bumble, one and indivisible, with the same plenary inspiration of Bumbleism, in both aspects ; and the discrimination is but a matter of convenience, furnishing us with two consummate types, the one for social, the other for political study. The *Imitation of Christ* is supposed to have wrought some good in Europe : he will be England's chief saint and sage who can give us a masterly *Imitation of Bumble.* In the meantime we cannot do better than read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest, out of doors the ensample of Bumble the Beadle, at home the ensample of Bumble the Churchwarden. This Bumble at home can be most jolly and hospitable, can display the most excellent common-sense, is often what we term well-educated, and is in the enjoyment of an easy competence if not absolutely wealthy. For Bumble at home is at home with the middle classes. "The nobles have their traditions, the poor have their aspirations, the middle classes have nothing but their money." The nobles look backward to their Creator, the poor look forward to their Redeemer,

the middle classes look neither to the past nor to the future, but enjoy the present whose Holy Ghost is Bumbleism. And the middle classes, as everybody knows, now rule England; and their Bible is the *Times*, of late, like other Bibles, losing much of its authority, and over which may soon be written the epitaph: "Here still lies the *Times*, once a great power; singular among despots and demagogues for this, that it never, during many years of supreme sway, had one moment of magnanimity."

Holy is the spirit of Bumbleism, glorious is the constitution of Bumbledom, great in rank and wealth and power is Bumble, in this our happy Island of the Free! We have not a King Stork, as so many continental miserables have; Bumble is our King Log, a good quiet king, though he beareth somewhat heavily upon our shoulders. He ruleth England far more than do Queen, Lords, and Commons, with the noble Fourth Estate into the bargain. Little hindereth that his sway be carried out into its ideal perfection; as Dryden hath pictured it with rapture in *Macflecknoe*, and Pope with ecstasy in the *Dunciad*. These men, who were rhymers, clever, but vagabonds of restless, unstable, and foolishly excitable temperament, could not appreciate the worth of the character whose lineaments they saw clearly and drew well: this profound and godlike tranquillity, this equally godlike subsistence without need of thought and speculation, without possibility of development, this magnificent eupepsy of the world and life, they termed *Dulness*, and used this grand word (which involves the loftiest sublimities of immutable inertia) in a base sense of *stupidity* or *duncehood*—just as the lovely word *simple* has been perverted to convey the meaning of *silly*. However, as the word *Dulness* is now by usage established, we may as well boldly adopt it (using it reverentially, not with the evil intention of those who sit in the seats of the scornful),

and admit that the essence of the potency of Bumbleism is Dulness; dulness placid and content, dulness of the highest respectability, dulness infallible and impeccable; dulness which preacheth and heareth sermons,—the force of dulness can no further go. The abysses of this dulness no plummet can ever fathom; philosophy may be very profound, yet remain but a shallow pool when compared with these divine depths; the noblest alacrity in sinking will not enable the deepest philosopher to arrive at the "floor of the bottomless." Peter Bell may give some faint idea of this dulness; and by *Peter Bell*, I mean either the poem itself of Wordsworth or the hero of the poem of Shelley; for Peter Bell, like Bumble, is duplicate—nay, the best authority says that he is triplicate, and so is Bumble, but we are not concerned with Bumble in his beatitude of Bumbleism beyond the tomb :—

> His sister, wife, and children yawned
> With a long slow and drear *ennui*
> All human patience far beyond;
> Their hopes of Heaven they would have pawned
> Anywhere else to be.
>
> But in his verse, and in his prose,
> The essence of his dulness was
> Concentered and compressed so close,
> 'Twould have made Guatimozin doze
> Upon his red gridiron of brass.

(And what better service, I should like to know, *could* have been rendered to Guatimozin in his exceedingly uncomfortable predicament than this of making him doze?)

These two stanzas—by a vagabond yet more restless and unstable and foolishly excitable than those two other vagabonds I have mentioned—relate to the dulness of *Peter Bell;* were their intensity exalted to the hundredth power, they would relate equally well (with reverence be it written) to the dulness of Bumble.

Bumble is not malignant; he is King Log. But one thing he does hate—if an ecstasy of blind wrath and terror can be called hatred: this thing is a new idea, or even the semblance of a new idea such as a novel opinion. He abhors it as a bull or a quaker abhors scarlet, or a Calvinist the Scarlet Lady. And I hold that he is thoroughly justified in his abhorrence. Every new idea is a reproach and insult cast upon our old doctrines and institutions; and the sacred spirit of our old doctrines is Bumbleism; the most venerable of our old institutions is Bumbledom. Bumble is the very bull's-eye of the target against which new ideas rain bullets: and would you expect a living bull's-eye to love marksmen? If things as they immemorially have been and as they now are—our holy Church and noble State, as by law and the wisdom of our ancestors established—be worthy of the most reverent conservation; what pretence can there be for changing them by the application of new ideas? If you want variety (and were you a regular, consistent, well-principled character, you would not want variety), content yourself with dressing up the old ideas in new fashions, as you are fain to content yourself with dressing your own old body in occasionally new garments; do not sap the foundations of our prosperity and undermine the constitution of Bumbledom with new-fangled ideas. For ideas are most perilous things to handle; suddenly explosive as gunpowder and gun-cotton, no one is safe from being blown up by them, and Bumble is safe to be blown up by them: Guy Fawkes *may* go in fragments through the air, the Parliament Houses with king, bishops and nobles are sure to, if once the confounded train catches.

II.

I HAVE said that the Fourth Estate itself is not nearly so powerful as Bumble; and as much ludicrous misunderstanding appears to prevail regarding the subject, it may be as well to amplify the assertion. We know that the Press is continually boasting that it leads public opinion, and we are pleasantly called upon to pretend or even endeavour to think that this leading is away from Bumbleism into the Promised Land of New Ideas. It is a good joke; and Bumble can afford to buy the journals in thousands and tens of thousands, and chuckle over it with happy equanimity. What fun that the journalists, of whom about ninety-nine of every hundred are born Bumbles, but weakly and afflicted with incontinency of their dulness, and of whom about ten times ten of every hundred mainly or wholly depend for their livelihood upon the favour of their stronger brother Bumbles, should affect freedom from and enmity to Bumbleism! The joke is enormously useful to Bumbledom. We poor people, for instance, are getting more and more dissatisfied with things as they are, and resolve to emigrate for the Promised Land of New Ideas: forthwith half the Bumble trumpeters of the Press open their throats of brass, and put themselves in our van, blaring: "We, and we only, can and will lead you out of this stupid old Bumbledom into the Canaan flowing with milk and honey!" And in case we should doubt these fair promises, the opposition moiety of the trumpeters open *their* throats of brass, screaming dolorous, wrathful, desperate: "The poor dear ignorant people are being led away from the venerable sanctuary of Bumbleism, from the paternal care of Bumbledom, to perish in the Wilderness of Sin and New Ideas!" This testimony, wrung from the rage of the antagonists, kills our last

doubt, and we throng multitudinously after those first trumpeters, who straining their throats of brass lead us forth gallantly, round, and round, and round, through interminable dreary tracts, and at last bring us, all bewildered and exhausted, to the old flesh-pots again, to the cucumbers, and the melons, and the leeks, and the onions, and the garlic, and, with a joyous final flourish, proclaim: "Lo, the true Promised Land! lo, the real milk and honey!—the only milk and honey in this life attainable!" Wearied and disheartened, we perforce rest discontentedly contented for another period. Now, were there none of these clever leaders of public opinion, we poor stupid people might really emigrate by marching stupidly right forward; and so Bumbleism and Bumbledom get actually abandoned.

Of course, the Press, while thus continually boasting of its freedom, knows quite well, and has a comfortable understanding with Bumbledom, that it is, in fact, only free to glorify Bumble. It truckles to him more abjectly than does any commonplace man in private life. For this commonplace man makes boots or hats or coats, sells bread or meat or beer, things which Bumble cannot help liking and must have; while the journalist manufactures and sells only opinions, which are things that Bumble can do very well without, and won't buy if they are not manufactured to please him. A journalist could no more live by producing opinions too large for Bumble, than a tailor by making coats to the size of Daniel Lambert, or a bootmaker by proportioning boots from the ground plan of Adam's foot in Ceylon. Journalist, tailor, and bootmaker, must all manufacture their articles to the size of their customers: luckily for tailor and bootmaker, it is not ignominious and demoralising to manufacture *their* articles thus. The Press truckles to Bumble, and beslavers him with flattery, and when it ventures to rally him, it does so in

the self-same spirit with which a Court-jester used now and then to rally his royal master; and it always apologises to him for any chance glimmer of new light that may manage to penetrate its close columns, by immediately proving that the said glimmer must have come from Bumble's own parlour-fire or one of his church-tapers.

And not only the Press but the mass of our contemporary literature is thus slavishly subservient to Bumble. He cares little for abstract politics, and less for science and art: therefore on politics, science and art, bookmakers may almost express what they please. But Bumble is the virtuous husband of one virtuous wife, and the father of a thriving legitimate family, and as "church-going" as Cowper's bell (when did *it* go to church, I wonder, after the visit in which it was hung?); and woe be to any one who shall have the audacity to shock his cherished, his sacred convictions, on any social or moral or religious matter!

Freedom (that is to say, practical freedom) of the Press and of publication generally, is greater in England than on the continent only in certain respects; it is far less in other respects, which certainly are not so important to comfortable animal life, but which are very much more important to the higher intellectual and moral life. We can write freely of the acts of our government and of the public acts of our public men, we can freely discuss our political questions (or, more precisely, questions in the sphere of political expediency), as no writers in Germany or France dare to discuss and write about their home-politics and statesmen. But, on the other hand, a writer in France or Germany can freely discuss questions of religion, of casuistry in morals, of sociology, as no English writer who lives by his writings dare discuss. If the French paper or book ventures beyond the bounds of governmental restrictions in

politics, it is warned or suppressed by the Government. If the English paper or book ventures beyond the bounds of Bumbledom's restrictions in religion or morals, it is effectually suppressed by Bumble,—he won't buy it, however brilliant and thoughtful and honest it may be. Imperialism imposes fines, imprisonment, banishment; Bumble simply imposes death by starvation. For the one man-in-black who visits the editors of Paris, we have ten thousand men-in-black. We are free to print what we will; but we must be very rich in courage and money, or independence of money, to afford the free exercise of our freedom. We are also free to become candidates for Parliament, "to enter the London Tavern," to seek equity in the Court of Chancery, to attempt arson and murder and suicide.

Our present literature is so devotedly subservient to Bumble, that I think it may be safely asserted that there are not half-a-dozen thoughtful and powerful writers now in England, writers able to earn a good livelihood with the pen, who have ever attempted since they were mature frankly to publish their thoughts and feelings on subjects interdicted by Bumble; that is to say, on precisely the most important and urgent problems in religion and sociology. For all thought bearing on the future of our race, and not physico-scientific or artistic, we are nearly in a state of sterile impotence. Pick up a popular French or German book, and note how many problems in morality and religion are touched upon, how much free and healthy scepticism is carelessly implied or explicitly stated; problems with which no English writer whose book is meant to sell would dare to grapple, scepticism which he dare not avow any more than a Gallic writer dare openly attack the Empire. And then ponder what warm interest in these questions, what freedom in their discussion, what wholesome love of originality, what toleration of honest doubt, what devotion

to the pursuit of truth, must have existed for long years among the French and Germans, ere light popular literature could make good use of such problems and flourish on such scepticism. How many English writers of repute, earning good incomes by their writings, would have the courage, however pure and lofty their intent, to treat with the same freedom the same subjects we find treated in a work of Balzac or Heine? Bumble scareth from such essays: our professional bookmakers suppress their own most vigorous and honest thoughts; and the vast majority do much worse, lubricating Bumbledom with oily cant inexpressibly and revoltingly nauseous. For Bumble is pitiless in his rage. Quiet as King Log when undisturbed, patient, slow, and mighty of digestion for all the "good things" of this life, as Carlyle's Oxen of the Gods (each of which, indeed, is a very Apis of the Bumble-worship of John Bull); he is furious when roused; like the Enceladus of Keats—

> Once tame and mild
> As grazing ox unworried in the meads;
> Now tiger-passioned, lion-thoughted, wroth.

Bumble will permit no one in England to write against the sanctities of Bumbleism or the decorums of Bumbledom, under penalty of being an outcast, despised of men and rejected of women, who must starve if he has learnt no better trade than bookmaking. But in the matter of reading, Bumble is more tolerant. The continental languages are very useful, and to keep up one's knowledge of those languages, one must occasionally read in their books. Fortunately for Bumble, it happeneth that, as a rule, the very people who know continental languages and can afford to purchase their literature, are the rich and powerful, are Society with a capital S; Society, which Bumble holds in equal reverence with the Golden Calf, and with whose

pleasures and privileges he would never willingly interfere; for in his private churchwarden capacity, the chief object of his ambition is to become part and parcel of this Society. Hence, while good Mrs. Bumble and the angelic Miss Bumbles distribute and recommend pious tracts to the poor as the only profitable reading in addition to the Bible and the Book of Common Prayer, they never dream of thrusting these tracts into the hands of the rich: the rich may import any number of books in all the colours of the rainbow full of *livres* and lechery from France, any weight of slab-like tomes ponderous with Rationalism and erudite Infidelity from Germany. One condition, however, is perfectly understood: in any review of these books, all the narrative pieces which specially tickled and enthralled must be overwhelmed with the fiercest of virtuous indignation; all the argumentative passages which really threw light upon vexed questions, must be sternly denounced, the illumination being clearly traced to the Nether Fire. This condition faithfully observed, the poor and uneducated scared from corruption, Society may read without stint. Thou dear respectable Churchwarden-Bumble, it is pleasant to think how thy Vicar and Archdeacon and Bishop have laughed with inextinguishable laughter over Aristophanes and Lucian and Rabelais and Heine; how all thy decorous sons would get full marks in a competitive examination based on Paul de Kock; how thy daughters Angelina and Seraphina, who distribute the tracts, have thrilled over the pages of Soulié and epicene Sand.

Nay, Bumble in his adoration of Society, will even allow the wealthy and noble to laugh and sneer at his most cherished convictions, so long as the laugh and the sneer circulate exclusively in the higher circles, and are not put into books for the perdition of the lower classes, of the ignorant rabble, who, massed and levelled, make such a

broad firm floor for his feet, that he may walk through life eminent and unsoiled. And now and then he goes further yet, half awaking to the perception that he himself, and many of his dearest brother Bumbles, of the glorious dynasty of Bumbledom, have secret doubts as to the infallibility of Bumbleism, and venture at whiles to fancy that their heads would be more light and comfortable if relieved from the enormous cocked hats, and their limbs more free were the ample scarlet cloaks thrown off. Yet he and they continue to wear the old garments solemnly, keeping each other in countenance and overawing the vulgar. For good habits are the ideal of Bumble's morality; never mind from what motives and for what purposes they are worn.

Yet, let no one accuse Bumble of conscious insincerity; dissimulation he detests, though a discreet simulation he may patronise. When he seems to the irreverent observer to be playing the hypocrite in concert with his brother Bumbles, be assured that he is doing what he is doing with the very best intentions, and the saintliest anxiety for the continuation of the stability and prosperity of that Bumbledom which he honestly loves and venerates.

Bumble is not thus mightiest of the mighty altogether by his own innate strength, supernal as is the power of inertia and masterly inactivity, unconquerable as is that aboriginal dulness, "against which the gods themselves fight in vain." He is permanently strengthened by nearly the whole deadweight of the men who are not Bumbles, but who lavish all their living momentum to push the progress each of his particular art, science, or profession, and in all matters beyond passively side with Bumble. By a tribute of nine-tenths to Bumble, they obtain permission to devote one-tenth to individuality. Thus eminent sailors, soldiers, engineers, painters, bankers, merchants, whose work is their worship, use all their vital energy in their work, and thus,

as a rule, can care very little, and do very little, for anything else, except, perhaps, some harmless hobby. So, for the most part, they are ready to acquiesce quietly in whatever creed they find predominant about them: to take up with a heresy would injure their special work in two ways—by lowering them in public opinion, and by making large demands upon the energy which can scarcely in the present age be more than adequate for their special work. And the creed predominant around them is naturally always the creed of Bumbleism; so that, although they contribute to Bumbledom none of the thought and ability which have made them eminent, they add to it the whole power of their general reputation; and if any audacious wight, who *has* bestowed thought upon the creed, ventures to impugn it, he is at once overwhelmed by the authority of these certainly distinguished men. In other words, Bumbleism is the bed in which great activities and intelligences sleep; when they awake, they leave it for the bank, the ship, the railroad, the factory, the studio: yet Bumble complacently brags of them as if all their great works had been wrought while in the bed of Bumbleism they reposed. Very few men indeed have enough individuality to animate the whole circle of their being.

The irreverent, and the giddy, and the vagabond, have laughed much at Bumble as beadle; they do not find it so easy to laugh at him in domestic life as the churchwarden. These irreverent scholars and thinkers are very bold and scornful creatures in their libraries; Aristophanes, Lucian, Rabelais, Montaigne, Shakespeare, Swift, Voltaire, Lessing, Göthe, Leopardi, Heine, Burns, Shelley, Carlyle, and the like pestilent authors ranged around them; but when in the dining-room, or the railway carriage, they meet a respectable churchwarden Bumble, rich, self-complacent with health and prosperity, clear-headed for all ordinary busi-

ness, conspicuously excellent in all the common relations of life, self-reliant (that is to say, reliant on the whole of Bumbledom which backs him); where then is the courageous and scornful criticism of the scholars and thinkers? The thinker feels as if he had no firm standing-ground; "sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought," he seems to himself thin and unsubstantial; his ideas of the study have kept in the study and won't come at his command, or if they do come, sneak in with an air of utopian silliness: he is crushed by the broad firm-planted weight, by the flourishing suave and rotund completeness, of this excellent, cheerful, comfortable, prosperous, moral Bumble; and is far more inclined to envy than disdain. Is this, the poor thinker asks himself, one of those dead barren rock-cliffs against which the restless and luminous waves of the living sea, tide after tide, year after year, century after century, fling themselves so gallantly and so vainly, ever flung back in ragged foam? Why, this is a fat and smiling river valley, rich in corn and wine and oil, full of all manner of pleasantness, the sheltered abode of prosperity and peace; and the sea itself is barrenness and desolation and everlasting unrest. Thus, the law of compensation works: abstract thought triumpheth throughout the millenniums over abstract Bumbleism; but the concrete Bumble triumpheth in his generation over the concrete thinker.

Here should follow a rhapsody on the primordial generation and the final cause of the sacred existence of universal Bumbledom, including Bumble proper, and *Epicier* and *Philister*, and all other species of the sublime genus. What magnificent themes for dithyrambic! but lack of space, not to speak of the writer's modesty, forbids the attempt to do justice to them. There is room, however, for one little confession. Were I a well-known author, flourishing on authorship, and writing for a respectable

periodical, I should never dream of exposing, even so slightly as I have here exposed, the solemn mysteries of Bumbleism. Luckily I am an author thoroughly unknown, and writing for a periodical of the deepest disrepute. One is very free, with no name to lose; and one is freer still, with such a name that it cannot possibly be lost for a worse; and, between us, we possess both these happy freedoms. It is really remarkable that authors and periodicals can bear to be cabined, cribbed, confined, within the gilded bars of a good reputation! Bumble is generally attacked, as revolutions are stirred up, by young fellows and old fellows not yet arrived at years of discretion, who have little or nothing to lose, save their heads, which (as in my own case) being of quite inconsiderable value, they quite inconsiderately venture. In revolutions there are always two or three wealthy nobles, who, transported by an insanely generous enthusiasm, fight for the people more valiantly than the people fight for themselves. And just so in literature, there are always two or three really great writers living, who fling assured wealth and reputation to the winds, and dash their heads against Bumbledom. But these exceptions are so rare, and especially so rare in England, that, though very important in themselves, they are hardly worth reckoning as a limitation to the broad rule that he who attacks Bumbledom is he who has not the power and ability to thrive in the world as it is. Thus have I written my own condemnation, immolating myself, as well it behoves me, beneath the irresistible Triumphal Car of our great, our divine Juggernauth—Bumble.

PER CONTRA: THE POET, HIGH ART, GENIUS.

1865.

—o—

I.

Glendower. I framèd to the harp
Many an English ditty lovely well,
And gave the tongue an helpful ornament,
A virtue that was never seen in you.

Hotspur. Marry,
And I am glad of it with all my heart:
I had rather be a kitten and cry mew,
Than one of these same metre ballad-mongers.
—*First Part of Henry IV.*

WHAT are the best names to oppose in extreme opposition to the Bumble, Bumbledom, Bumbleism, which are so good and expressive? Even Mr. Matthew Arnold would not, I am sure, recommend us to term the natural enemies of his Philistines, the Jews, the Hebrews, or the Israelites. Children of the light, chosen people, idealists, *idéologues*, are too vaporous and vague: a name is wanted that will stick. The German *high-flyers* is very good. *Bohemians*, the favourite denomination just now, is too much associated with loose-living and poverty for my special purpose; nor

is it limited to the artist-tribe : Balzac's *Prince de la Bohême* would have quite agreed with Hotspur, although the glorious quaternion of Henry Mürger (*Scènes de la Vie de Bohême*) are a musician, a painter, a poet, and a *philosophe.* Poet and High Art and Genius are terms of serious value, although ludicrous enough now-o'-days from the mouths and pens of so many simpletons drunk with the noble wine of Emerson and Shelley. However, until better denominations are discovered or invented, one must use these, admitting that they are not the very words he should use : Poet standing for the Priest of Beauty in general, whatever material he consecrates to its service (isn't this the correct sort of phrase ?) ; High Art for the loftiest Expression of the Beautiful, in which more or less latent are involved the Good and the True (could our humbug-in-chief, Pinchbeck-Bulwer-Lytton, put it more neatly ?) ; and Genius for the divine (never forget the *divine*) Inspiration of the Poet and Spirit of High Art.

A hundred years ago a good writer was the *ingenious* Mr. Blank, and a hundred years before *that great wit.* In this present year of grace, if we referred to the ingenious Mr. Blank, it would be thought that he had patented a new washing-machine or something of the kind ; and if we spoke of a man as that great wit, it would be understood that he punned like Theodore Hook or versified like the author of the *Ingoldsby Legends.* Nothing will do now as an attribute of praise but Genius. Never before was "the divine right of Genius" so much lectured and written about : "the divine right of Kings" was just such a favourite theme in the reigns of James I., who was despised ; of Charles I., who was beheaded ; of Charles II., that angel of the Blessèd Restoration ; and of James II., who was kicked out of the kingdom. Talent itself has become a word of scorn rather than praise : scarcely a week passes but periodicals of the *London Journal*

type have paragraphs of subtle and detailed contrast between Talent and Genius, all odiously to the disadvantage of the former. Were Gubbins, or Gigadibs, or any other of the writers of these profound and sublime paragraphs, to hear your opinion that though certainly a man of very astonishing talents he is not quite a genius, he would detest and despise you ever after. What! he Gubbins, he Gigadibs, merely a man of talent, not a child of genius! Gubbins, who knows perfectly every shade of difference between Genius and Talent! Gigadibs, who can write you out recipes for Shakespeares and Raphaels and Beethovens as readily as Monsieur Soyer could write recipes for puddings and soups! The possession of this or the other special talent you are at liberty to deny to Gubbins or Gigadibs; the possession of indefinite Genius, with a capital G, I warn you to concede.

In the midst of this universal adoration of creative genius, what creative genius have we exerting sublime energies for us? What living artistic genius have we, exercising influence and commanding homage of which a lofty-minded and strong-minded man could justly be proud? We have, I believe, one such poet in verse, whose name is Robert Browning. We have, I believe, not one such poet in music or sculpture. As to architecture I cannot pretend to judge; but the least tepid praises one meets with scarcely point to such a master. In history and philosophy we have Carlyle and Garth Wilkinson. Of the Fine Arts, proper, only in painting and in the prose fiction which has superseded the old English drama, can three or four of these commanding geniuses be found. Half-a-dozen novels, Carlyle's *French Revolution*, Holman Hunt's *Light of the World*, Ruskin's great works, have probably had more effect on the heart and mind and soul of England than has been wrought by all the music and verse and sculpture and architecture to which this generation has given birth.

Perhaps the briefest and clearest answer to our exuberant dithyrambs on the divine mission and prerogatives of genius, will be drawn out by the simple question: With what expectations do we ordinary people commence the study of a new "work of genius"? Whereto the honest reply is: We look to these grand and glorious and immortal works, which have enraptured the thoughtful critics of journalism, generally for pleasure and amusement, scarcely ever for real delight and education; while as for ecstasy and inspiration, we have not by experience any idea of what these words may mean. Yet History proves beyond a doubt that in old times great works of Art have in the fullest sense of the term inspired their students, and have wrought the hearers or spectators to ecstasy. The same works would not wield the same influence now; and the works that are produced now wield influence of how different a kind. Thus, try to fancy a student sitting down to read a new volume of poems, with the hope of finding therein some breath of a really divine afflatus! Something that will rock the walls and rend the foundations of his old prison-house of habit as with an earthquake, something that will daze and blind his earthly vision as with a great light from Heaven, something that will melt and consume away his old commonplace existence with the fervent heat of enthusiasm! The fancy is too extravagant to be entertained for a moment. Experience has taught us to expect so little; we condescend, and know that we condescend, to be amused. Some pretty and graceful verses, some amiable sentiments, thoughts not too far below the standard of the best current thought; let us find these, and we deign to approve. Can the critics, I wonder, look each other in the face without laughing, when their rapturous eulogies have appeared in print? Set apart some half-dozen works of our generation, and try seriously and thoughtfully to fit the very

choicest of the remainder with the choicest epithets; epithets with which the great old works are naturally invested, and with which our periodical critics freely invest scores of works as they appear; epithets such as grand, noble, magnificent, consummate; and you discover that the robes are far too ample and rich, the forms far too petty and mean, for befitting investiture; you must leave the old royal garments sacred to the old regal forms; and for these new forms find garments of another size and fashion, fitting them with pretty, graceful, clever, lively, sparkling, and so forth. In brief, I think it is clear that High Art and Creative Genius exercise now (and, such as they are at present, deservedly exercise) as little influence on the broad world as they ever did. They are resorted to for amusement, not earnestly; and the pleasure derived from them is of scarcely a loftier kind, and is assuredly not greater in degree, than that enjoyed in a game of cards or billiards, or with a pipe and a glass in a Music Hall.

I have not mentioned the Drama among the present Fine Arts, simply because we have no drama now worthy of the name. In the best Novels we have much of the gold that was of yore lavished in Plays; but as a rule the workmanship in the novels is far less vigorous and masterly, and the alloy of a much lower standard. The drama demands more thought and wisdom, more insight and concentrated passion, more power and energy, than the novel. The genuine drama involved in a novel (I mean an English novel) is usually padded out with easy and thoughtless pages of trite reflection, inventory description, and multitudinous insignificant detail. The drama is eminently masculine, the novel eminently feminine. The substitution of the latter for the former has doubtless contributed to the further emasculation of our literature, of which it was primarily a symptom and effect. It is astonishing what a

large part of even a good modern book has been written without any exercise of the faculty of thought. Without going back to Shakespeare and Bacon, we may select works from a literary epoch upon which we affect to look down, works such as Pope's *Essay on Man* or Swift's *Tale of a Tub*, wherein nearly every sentence has required a distinct intellectual effort, and which thus, whatever their faults, shame by their powerful virility our effeminate modern books.

But if the divine mission of genius, like many another mission, effects little or nothing upon the commonplace mass of us; surely the divine prerogatives of genius are of inestimable value to the geniuses themselves? This is a question deserving consideration.

Supposing the vitality equal in two men, that which has the more spontaneous and immediate expression—or, to speak grammatically, that which more nearly approaches spontaneity and immediateness in its expression—is undoubtedly to be preferred to the other. Thus the man whose common gestures and words and actions in the ordinary course of life are easy and appropriate and beautiful, are real fugitive poems naturally rhythmic with time and place and circumstance, is much more to be envied than he who can only express himself adequately, that is, with an approximation to adequacy, by painting or sculpture or music or verse, with long and exhausting labour, with frequent heavy disappointments, with unsightly gaps in his career of heartsick languor and dismal stupidity and desolate despair,—all of which he feels most painfully, though the men who come after him are apt to overlook them, seeing only the brilliant crests of his loftiest moments. A poem is praised above all else for this, that it is the expression of eternal truth and beauty, not of transitory accidents. Yet the perfect expression of anything must

conspicuously express just those transitory accidents which differentiate it from all similar precedent and subsequent things. What would be the portrait of a man, neither tall nor middle-sized nor short, with eyes and hair of no particular accidental colour, bearing no transitory expression, clothed but clothed in no transitory fashion, and so forth? And the law which applies to the perfect expression of anything, applies equally to the perfect enjoyment. Life is mainly made up of transitory accidents, and he who cannot enjoy these cannot enjoy life. Make a coat to fit every man tolerably well, and it will fit no one man thoroughly well. The rose from which a lasting perfume is distilled has not been allowed to live out its natural and most beautiful life on the tree. Browning gives the whole philosophy of this matter in one pregnant verse: "Sing, 'Riding's a joy!'— for me, I ride." And Mrs. Browning pathetically expresses the same philosophy in her poem of *The Great God Pan* and in *Aurora Leigh*. The Geniuses who nourish our spirits, like the cattle and sheep and pigs which nourish our bodies, must be mulcted of the free existence of their kind, and not spared to die natural deaths.

Let an artist on some great holiday be amongst the multitudes witnessing some procession or pageant. He finds full exercise for his extraordinary faculties of perception and observation; he studies with keen interest countless effects of colour and light and shade, innumerable faces and forms with innumerable expressions and characteristics; but does he thoroughly enjoy the holiday pageant itself? No; for he uses it but as the means to an end, and not the poorest thing in the world will suffer itself thus used to be perfectly enjoyed. The inmost charm of the pageant, the finest essence of the holiday, are enjoyed by the little ragged boy getting dirtier and more ragged as he writhes eager through the mob; not by the artist who shall give

us so magnificent a picture of the scene. Let a poet be of the party in some merry picnic. Do you think he enjoys it as thoroughly as it is enjoyed by the simple youths and thoughtless girls, or even by the stout matrons and old fogies, around him? The probability is, that he proves about the dullest person in the party. He is reflecting and observing while the others are enjoying; he is so used to reflect and observe that he cannot throw off these staid habits and plunge into the glittering stream of the revelry. Yet some days or weeks afterwards, musing upon the elements of delight which existed in the company and the excursion, he distils them into a poem exquisitely delightful, a poem overbrimming with the pure joyousness which he ought to have felt but did not feel, and which the commonplace people about him really did feel; though they could give it only fugitive expression in chatter and laughter and dancing and romping, while he can give it quasi-enduring expression in lovely verse.

A pageant and a picnic are not the most lofty of instances; I might have used as effectively the most solemn or heroic or useful action. The man we call a Poet would be absent-minded, would not enjoy full presence of mind, that is to say, would not fully and intensely live in any one. He sings of that which he cannot enjoy, cannot achieve; if at any time he can enjoy it, can achieve it, be sure that he is not then pondering or singing it. Where and when rich life is present, it lives, and does not content itself with shadowing forth and celebrating life. When and where rich life is not present, the shadowing forth and celebration of life may partially console for its absence, or may even partially illude into the belief in its presence. Yet life remains and ever is as superior to art as a man to the picture of a man. Men abounding and pictures being rare, a picture will often be valued by us far more than would the

original'; similarly, life being abundant and art rare, we often value a fraction of art more than the fraction of life of which it is the shadow or symbol : but our valuations do not affect the absolute and relative worth of the things in themselves.

II.

My opinion is that artistry accuses weakness and lack of vitality in the artist, when not pursued simply as a relaxation or as the least irksome mode of earning the daily bread. If a man, being poor, can earn more and earn it more easily and pleasantly by painting pictures than by ploughing and reaping, let him paint. But in this case he paints to live, he does not live to paint; his art is purely a trade, not a divine mission and holy vocation, as so many of us in these years regard it. If a man, being rich, finds happy filling up of idle hours in making verses, let him make verses: but let us clearly understand that his art is simply a hobby and a pastime. If the poor man and the rich man were endowed with keener intelligence and more puissant vitality, they would prefer a trade and a hobby bringing them into closer and warmer relations with the living world and their fellow-men, demanding more courage and energy and sympathy and fortitude and wisdom. Still, the necessities of the outer life absolve from the extreme accusation of weakness and poverty in the inner life. But when a man devotes himself body and soul to art, becomes willingly the slave of it and glories in the slavery, it is another thing. What should we think of a fellow who, having money to live independently, made himself a flunkey, through admiration of the grand house and the carriage, through pure delight in the plush and powder? What should we think of a wealthy creature who preferred fiddling in the orchestra to

dancing and making love with a pretty girl at the ball? What should we think of a noble lord who, rather than feast with the feasters, set himself among the press-gang, enthusiastic to give a glowing report of the feast? or who elected to assist in the cooking rather than the eating of the dinner? The real flunkey and fiddler and reporter and cook may be acquitted on the plea of necessity; they would severally much rather order than serve, dance than fiddle, feast than describe, enjoy than prepare; if in these instances they exercise certain arts of life for the pleasure of others instead of living for the pleasure of themselves, it is because they are obliged to work in order to live. And they do such work as their characters and abilities and opportunities enable them to get and to do. Their work is not their real life, but it earns the means of nourishing such individual life as they have. We admit their plea of necessity, and are only sorry for them that they are not able to do nobler kinds of work. But for the others who, not driven by external need, but led by internal inclination, toiled for the sake of the toil itself, we should have simply compassion and contempt. Yet wise people have not yet ceased to wonder how Shakespeare in the maturity of his faculties, as soon as he had made a comfortable fortune, could renounce the sublime work of producing comedies and tragedies to settle down as a jolly burgess in his native place!

It appears to me that the very greatest geniuses, those whom we really reverence in their complete manhood, have worked at their art with a distinct consciousness that it was but a trade, an apology for better work from which they were shut out by hostile circumstances; or a pleasant relaxation, a hobby to carry them at a canter through dull hours. Dante's work was heart and soul in "the petty and transitory interests" of his native town, until defeat and exile drove him into bitter immortality. Milton threw him-

self heart and soul into "the petty and transitory interests" of his age and country: his first poems were the refined amusements of youth, his last great poems the consolations of a defeated partisan, old and blind, and cut off from the active life to which the maturity of his powers had been passionately devoted. Shakespeare wrote no more when he could afford to live without writing ; and, in his Sonnets cx. and cxi., especially the latter, we may read how he contemned the art which has made him the crowning glory of our literature. Shelley yearned for the direct action of political life, and was disabled and outcast into the mere life of poetry. Novalis expresses himself with the utmost vigour : "Authorship is but a secondary thing ; you judge me more justly by the chief thing, by practical life. I only write for self-education." Leopardi devoted himself in despair to scholarship and poetry, because physical infirmity excluded him from active life. Sir Thomas More, Raleigh, Bacon, Selden, Vane, the two Sidneys, Bunyan, Swift, De Foe, Johnson, Scott, and, in fact, nearly all our greatest writers, ever held their authorship as thoroughly subservient to other ends of life. So in a great measure did the truly magnificent masters of Italy with their Art; and I doubt not that they would have done so thoroughly had not Art itself been then one of the most active of careers, bringing its professors into most energetic collision with the most vigorous vitality of the age, as witness the autobiography of Benvenuto Cellini. As it was, consider what Da Vinci, Giotto, Michael Angelo, Raphael, and the rest, did beyond the pale of mere Art. These men drove a flourishing trade in Art, and, at the same time, made the most vigorous career possible of it, and they were universally felt to be greater in themselves than in their works. But the works of the Artist, as he is conceived and worshipped in our days, are greater than himself; he is the slave of a sublime mis-

sion, the instrument of a divine inspiration, "the word which expresses what it understands not, the trumpet which sings to battle and feels not what it inspires." As such, I think that he is considerably less than a man; weak, diseased, mutilated, and more or less silly. A man of opulent vitality may be a lyrist, uttering himself now and then in brief snatches of song; but never while healthy and happy, and provided with cash, committing himself to the imprisonment with hard labour of a great work. If he be imprisoned in the common sense of the term, then his energies in the lack of fitter outlets may overflow into such a work: thus Raleigh wrote his "History of the World," Cervantes his "Don Quijote," Bunyan his "Pilgrim's Progress," in captivity; they dreamed grand dreams in their dungeons because they could not live realities in the free open air. Wine-songs are not written during the wine-intoxication, love-songs are not sung by kissing lips, war-songs are not chanted by the soldier battling breathless and dry-throated: often enough they are written and sung by those who never drink wine, who have no sweetheart, and who never were in battle. Analogies and illustrations crowd in from all quarters, and their abundance is in itself a strong argument for my thesis; for a truth finds brothers and sisters everywhere in the world, but an error can scarcely find anything in Nature to pass off as kith and kin.

Here the questions may be put: But does not everything consummate itself in expression? and is not Art pre-eminently expression? Yes; everything in the world consummates itself (*as the object of our knowledge*) in expression, and Art is pre-eminently expression—but of a peculiar kind. It is slow, mediate, studied, complicate, laborious expression; while the best expression of any being is spontaneous, immediate, instinctive, simple, unlaborious. Ascending into the regions of philosophy, we might discover

that, although the world consummates itself to our senses and intellect by expression, the innermost and purest and loftiest soul or essence of all things is supremely inexpressive; and that its expression in the sensible universe, in suns and planets, in trees and animals, is a degeneration; regeneration being only possible (as the wise Hindoos and others have taught) by the gradual extinction of all expression, the restoration to sole and infinite dominion of the primordial spiritual silence, perfect, immutable, eternal, self-involved, self-contemplating. But since it so has been that the Spirit has become the Word, and the Word has been made Flesh, we must admit that the law of our universe is that all things shall "wreak themselves on expression," that "the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain until now, and not only it but ourselves also," striving for perfect utterance of the unutterable. Perfect utterance cannot, of course, be attained; but the approach to perfection is in direct ratio to the spontaneous intuitiveness, and inverse ratio to the slow elaborateness. A remarkable instance is afforded by the *Genesis* account of God uttering himself in Creation. His first instinctive expression, "Let there be the light," is the very sublimity of jubilant power; and the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy. But day after day as the utterance grows more complex and elaborate, the rhetorical imagery more multitudinously profuse, he utters himself worse and worse; until on the sixth day, his figures of speech are cattle, and creeping things, and beasts of the earth, and finally, man and woman. Light in itself, pure, ever-joyous, life-giving, is so magnificent an expression of Deity that the most thoughtful races have worshipped it; but where is divinity in the cow and the viper and the polecat? And when one considers Man as the image of God, as the representative of perfect power and holiness and wisdom and love, as the earthly formula

of heavenly law, the temporal instrument of eternal Providence, one is constrained to the verdict that if a mere man made a machine for any purpose, so complex and fantastic, so easily disordered and destroyed, and, at the best, wasting so enormous a ratio of power by friction, that machine would not pay, the stupidest men would see that it was a thorough failure; it would be good only to cast into the fire,—and it is not wonderful that Christians in general, believing that man was intended for the image of God, have also believed that mankind on the whole is ultimately good for nothing else.

Artistry, then, as the absolute devotion to Art in and for itself, is, I repeat, a symptom of weakness; amiable weakness, if you like, but none the less privation of power. Coleridge finely said of the great poets, whose character is always superior to their works, that they are feminine not effeminate: of the mass of artists, the swarms of little poets, we may fairly say the reverse,—they are not feminine but effeminate.

To be weak is in itself to be miserable; and for the artist-nature, there is an additional misery in this, that in its spasms of strength, in its highest moments, it is solitary, unsympathising with the world and unsympathised with by the world. Fasting forty days upon the mountain, alone with its God, it descends to find all the people dancing and feasting and worshipping the golden calf; they are all happy and thoroughly understand one another, and have forgotten the poet whose fasting and solitude have been dedicated to their service: so he, the meekest of men, loses his serenity and storms in iconoclastic fury. The poetlings, indeed, may be invulnerable in a brazen armour of vanity and self-conceit, and may glory in their isolation from the vulgar mass as an incontestable proof of superiority; but the really great poet, who is great-hearted, must feel this isolation

with terrible pangs and yearnings which he knows are vain, and may starve in this dearth of sympathy like a sailor on a wreck in a shipless sea. And as for the superiority, he knows its true value. He knows into what magnificent thought and imagination an extra ounce of brain will beat out, for what grand creations an inch more breadth in the curve of the skull will make room. He knows that he is great only in comparison, and in a comparison whose standard of measurement is small as small can be; he knows that he is a giant like the king of Liliput, almost a nail's breadth taller than any of his subjects, striking awe into the beholder.

But is there not an ample compensation for all the disadvantages extrinsic and intrinsic of the poet? Is there not fame? One who is unambitious, and cares not a whit for fame which is renown and notoriety, caring only for some "love disguised" it may contain (an ear of wheat in a bushel of chaff), and for its accidental virtue of making the productions of its minions bring in plenty of cash; such a one is hardly competent to estimate fairly its value. The devotion to it must be deeply set in most species of human nature; for even an actor, who has been for years before the public, who is quite well known as Mr. A. in private life, whose worth as an actor has long been strictly appraised, and whose salary is invariable whatever parts be allotted to him, even he will be wrathful as Achilles if made to appear in a *rôle* which does not suffer him to shine during the two or three hours occupied by the play. An orator will swell with pride and delight when cheered by a lot of people, even if he knows them to be stupid and ignorant. A painter or poet or musician is intensely gratified by the applause of persons who, as he is thoroughly aware, are dunces in painting or poetry or music. Very great men (uncommonly tall pigmies) have been abject

suppliants to fame, and have yearned and toiled and suffered for genuine and wide and enduring renown; yet the most genuine is so full of illusion and mockery, the most wide is so narrow and superficial, the most enduring is so infinitesimally brief, that for my own part I am quite unable to understand how any intelligent person can set a high value upon it. Everything, however, as an element of happiness, is relative in its worth; and if a string of glass-beads gives more joy to a savage than would a volume of Shakespeare, the string of beads is undoubtedly of more worth to him; only he judges himself in judging the two objects, and with his preference obtains also our noble contempt for his barbarism. With such measure as ye mete it shall be meted to you again, is a truth of the widest application. Thus the tribe of artists, the poetlings, who in all respects get so much life-happiness from their vanity and conceit, get an immense amount of real happiness *of its kind* from their assurance of posthumous fame. If Sir Richard Blackmore believed that he would go down to remote posterity in a triumph of glory and honour, he was very much mistaken in himself and posterity; but the delusion was none the less genuine happiness to him alive. Therefore, while considering the absolute devotion to fame as the capital symptom of imbecility and weakness in the poets, I consider it also as the only advantage over common men in actual enjoyment with which they can fairly be credited. Common men live in the present, live while they are alive; these poets live in the future (*i.e.*, they believe they do, and happiness is but a bundle of pleasant beliefs—for the most part illusions), live when they are dead. "Will you have your life living or dead?" Nature asks us all; and these reply, "Dead." Ordinary hearty men live from day to day upon a competence of the current gold of the present; the votaries of fame (that *last* infirmity of noble minds, in

another sense than Milton's) exist on the paper money of heavy bills drawn on posterity. Posterity will ruthlessly dishonour nearly all these bills, quite all indeed which are drawn at very long dates; but luckily for the poor devils drawing them, they cannot be protested until after the drawer's death, and can always during his life be converted (negotiated by Vanity, discounted by the millionnaire Conceit) into large sums of real enjoyment. In these transactions the poet has the same advantage as a prophet flourishing on predictions to be fulfilled in a century or two; if they should not be fulfilled then, little matters to the prophet: what can have possessed Dr. Cumming when he brought forth prophecies which arrive at maturity in his own generation? How many poets would find a draft on the house of Fame negotiable if it fell due in their own lifetime? We may affirm that the superstition of fame, with the conceit of being superiorly gifted, is a crutch that supports the weakness of which it is an outward and visible sign; the crutch of the lame poets, all the poor beggars of ballad-mongers and painters and sculptors and musicians and philosophers, who, like so many santons, dervishes, fakeers, and mendicant friars, are held in such holy repute at present.

In order to complete the antithesis to Bumble, a few words should be added on the poets as the men of new ideas, the men always in advance of their age. I have only space left to refer to Browning's *Bishop Blougram's Apology*, wherein these men are sketched with a few masterly lines. I refer specially to the passage wherein the saintly bishop compareth these men unto travellers leaving arctic regions for the equator, who never wear the garb suited to the zone they are actually traversing, but always such garb as would suit the zone towards which they journey, and which they may never reach.

Byron writes in the *Prophecy of Dante*—

> Many are poets who have never penned
> Their inspiration—and perchance the best.

And, if poets are they who most intensely live, rejoicing supremely in the harmony and beauty of the world; if the very poets of poets are they who realise in flesh and spirit the loftiest dreams in marble and verse and sound and colour of the men we commonly call poets; then I heartily agree with Byron. But the extremely Byronic reasons why they did not pen their inspiration—that they would not lend their thoughts to meaner beings, and repressed the deity within, and so forth—I humbly opine to be stuff and nonsense. They do not *pen* their inspiration simply because they are able throughout and equably to *live* it; so far from repressing the deity within, they express it every day and hour and moment in their most ordinary words and deeds, an infinitely better kind of expression than that which is found in spasmodic poems of a dozen or two astonishing fyttes.

INDOLENCE: A MORAL ESSAY.

(*Calculated for a temperature of about* 90° *in the shade.*)

1867.

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I.

"This began with me from childhood, being a kind of voice which, when present, always diverts me from what I am about to do, but never urges me on."—Socrates of *his* good Genius, as reported by Plato in the "*Apology*."

"In this wide inland sea that hight by name
The Idle Lake, my wandring ship I row,
That knowes her port, and thether sayles by ayme,
Ne care ne feare I how the wind do blow,
Or whether swift I wend or whether slow:
Both slow and swift alike do serve my tourne."

Faërie Queene, b. ii. c. vi. st. 10.

A LITTLE boy (that same terrible infant who outflanks all our prudent maxims and moral texts) was so very lazy at his lessons one fine morning, that his mamma was driven to tell him in the solemn words of the poet, that Satan finds some mischief still for idle hands to do. "Ah," he sighed, "but if they felt as idle as me they wouldn't do it for him." With this piece of childish wisdom for a passport, one may venture in the dog-days to steal from out the turmoil of this

busy, busy London, and saunter for a few hours in the wild woods which encompass the pleasant Castle of Indolence; sauntering simply for enjoyment and recreation, revolving no schemes to clear the forest with axe and fire, and utilise the Castle as mill or factory. "If they felt as idle as me they wouldn't do it for him." Our little boy probably knew very little of grammar, and nothing of the momentous controversy which has raged around the personal pronouns *I* and *me*; it is moreover doubtful whether he discriminated between *idle* and *lazy*, but even if he did not, it by no means follows that his retort missed the mark, for idle hands may be idle through a laziness which would no more attempt Satanic than a better class of work. Surely an immense amount of mischief has been done for Satan on this earth of ours; but has the greater part thereof been wrought by indolent or by energetic hands? If we refer to general history and our particular experience for those who have done most harm in their lives, reckoning as harm only what seems sheer preponderance of evil over good, do we find the restless or the placid characters in the majority? A question each must resolve for himself: one could not hope in a brief essay to adduce typical examples in such number as to be of important weight on either side. In my own humble opinion the placid would emerge from this ordeal in rather better case than the energetic.

It may, however, be fairly expected that intelligent and vigorous young England, with Carlyle for its prophet (and take him for all in all few generations have had a nobler), will vehemently condemn the Idlers, the Do-nothings and Eat-alls, and vehemently extol the Earnest, Strong, Able men. For myself, I most respectfully discharge Carlyle from the court when any suit on this matter is pending. His continual cry of Work! Work! Work! is simply the Imperative mood of a doctrine which, couched in the quiet

Indicative, reads, "Mankind is a damned rascal."* Cool and languid believers in this hopeful doctrine are quite content with the cynical formula; our prophet, being ardent and tempestuous, and overflowing with sympathy as well as grim scorn and rage, tries to forget the formula in thunderous exhortations that yet have no sanction if it is not true. If we humbly inquire, Why work, work, work in this furious fashion? we shall find that the ultimate because is to the following effect: To save yourselves from yourselves; to overwhelm and exhaust the natural (sinful and foolish) man in each of you; to occupy all your hours and make them pass as swiftly as possible, thus distracting yourselves from vain talk and thought and self-consciousness, until you are got into the quiet grave, and securely covered over, impotent for further mischief. And if we continue to question, with a mean and selfish After? we can only learn that After is a black abyssmal Night, inscrutable, utterly void and silent; unless the prophet is in an unusually hopeful mood, when we seem to catch vague glimpses of a sort of Walhalla, whose sky is storm-cloud and whose air sad mist, where the heroes give and get incurable wounds, and where the rations of mead have been long ago stopped. Now these reasons, though very forcible, have not for many years past convinced

* It is worth noting that the two deepest and intensest convictions of Carlyle appear to be that "Life is infinitely earnest" and that "All dies, and is for a time only; is a Time-phantasm, yet reckons itself real;" in other words, he regards human life as at once a vanity of vanities and a supremely important reality. These convictions he expresses in many ways, but the one or the other will be found at the root of most he has written; and, a coincidence not to be lightly passed over, the same may be affirmed of the *Thoughts* of Marcus Aurelius. Yet these convictions are absolutely contradictory, and in logic one if not each must destroy the other: but our human nature is not logical; and as George Eliot somewhere remarks, it can accommodate the most hostile principles at the same time without any sense of embarrassment or inconsistency.

me that intense and unremitting labour is the supreme good of life; and these prospects, so alluringly cheerful, are the same for all lives, for the indolent no less than for the active. And if the chief end of human life is indeed escape from itself, this end can be attained at any hour by suicide, a much more rapid and easy process than the prolonged galley-slavery or penal servitude enjoined by our austere sage. I am therefore wont to enjoy his terrible Icelandic hurricanes of preaching with perfect tranquillity. In the words of His Most Serene Highness the Lord of the Castle of Indolence (c. 1, 43):—

> At doors and windows threat'ning seemed to call
> The demons of the tempest growling fell,
> Yet the least entrance found they none at all,
> Whence sweeter grew our sleep, secure in massy hall.

Thousands of men, however, middle-aged and practical, who read not and heed not the tough Carlylese, would unhesitatingly decide the question against the indolent, without reference to general history. For personal experience is always ready at the slightest hint to speak through them, in a voice somewhat loud and harsh, affirming that the busy are good and prosperous, and the idle are ne'er-do-weels. (*N.B.*—This applies only to common people; royal and aristocratic personages are the more to be reverenced the less they do.) In England the passion for work, which pervades and to a certain degree ennobles the lust for wealth, has become an irrational idolatry; labour is prized for itself, not as the means to an end. Thus it is now quite a commonplace to extol the blessing veiled under the curse, "In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread." Good people know better than God, and inform him and us that he was quite mistaken, that like Balaam he came to curse but really blessed, that Paradise Lost was in fact a Paradise Gained. Had the curse doomed us all to gulp down some

abominable physic every day of our lives, these good people would have proved this also a real benediction, for our constitutions would of course be diseased in horrible harmony with the diurnal dose. The curse is that we are such that we seem to need our punishment no less than our food. Let it not be forgotten that the busiest personage we know of is he, who brought upon us this burden of stupendous toil, he whom Charles Lamb so fitly defines "Sabbathless Satan." Whence the shrewder barbarians have offered their prayers and sacrifices not to the Good but to the Evil Spirit; arguing cogently that the former is a quiet, contented, sweet-natured being who can never dream of hurting anybody, while the latter is a restless and malicious imp whom it concerns poor mortals to propitiate if possible. These savages are wiser than our own multitudes who keep up a continual chorus in praise of work, as if all work were necessarily good, quite ignoring the fact which stares us everywhere in the face, that a very large proportion even of what we call honest commercial labour (if the term honest may be applied to any commercial labour) is mischievous as any Satan can find for idle hands to do.

Before discussing the general question I have raised, it will be well to note the different classes of the indolent; for indolence, like genius and love, while perhaps in the deepest deep always and everywhere one and the same, varies greatly with its various votaries in approaching and reaching the surface of expression. Thus there are many species of the indolent, though the world in its coarse and purblind fashion ranks some of them among the nobly assiduous, and huddles together all the rest in one indiscriminate condemnation. I have room here for only the leading divisions.

First, we have the large class of common idlers of the *lazzarone* type. Although in many respects of the lowest

class, they are in one respect, *i.e.* regarded simply as idlers, of the loftiest and purest, for their indolence has no other why or wherefore than indolence itself, their inertia is quite free from adulteration of motive or object; they are like certain men of genius who remain always obscure because they are all genius, having no vulgar profitable talents. About the happiest expression I have met with in English of the dominant mood of this class, is to be found in *The Lazy Tour of Two Idle Apprentices*, in some of the portions written by Dickens. Thomas Idle does not even get through the hours, "he lets the hours get through him;" the essence of the character in one perfect phrase. And Thomas Idle at the cricket-match is the very Don Quijote of the chivalry and innocence of Indolence; we laugh to the verge of lock-jaw, yet have all the while an underfeeling of the profound, the sacred pathos of a glorious ideal shattered against the rude realities of life. In the first of Goethe's two delightful metrical epistles, writ in his facile and flexible hexameters, we have the tale of another of the class, whose end satisfies poetical justice by the triumph of the ideal over surly commonplace. Goethe tells us that he heard a professional story-teller narrate it in Venice to the huge delight of his audience. One Master Without-care has been chased from home by an unappreciative family, and finds himself on board ship. Probably while lounging, half-disconsolate and half-rejoiced at his freedom, on that lounging-place the pier, he was attracted by a blue-peter flying; and had a most seductive vision of luminous seas, and far fair shores, and coral islands sun-tranced, where moiling civilisation and corrupting missionaries had not yet intruded; where he would be perfectly free from all responsibilities; where one is not even troubled with dressing and undressing; where rates and taxes, schools and factories, books and journals, and other such pests of progress, are

unknown; where the loaf of the loafer droppeth ready baked from the bountiful bread-fruit tree; and thus gladly smuggled himself on board as a stowaway, having of course no money to pay his passage (for what moneyed man was ever a Without-care?), bound for the realm of Wherever-you-like over which Chance and Fortune are King and Queen. The vessel was storm-driven to the island of Utopia, which lieth, if the story-teller lieth not, to the left of the Pillars of Hercules; very much "over the left" in our days it is to be feared. Our vagabond was received in the most friendly manner, and taken to an inn where he found the best of eating and drinking, the softest of couches, the most delicate attentions. So for a month he was quite happy, doing nothing with due deliberate dignity and faring sumptuously night and day. But then, alas! Mr. Without-care became Mr. With-much-care (the best of men sometimes lapse: let him that is without care cast the first stone!), for he began to brood over the bill that must soon be presented. He begged the good host to serve him less bountifully, and was thereafter served more bountifully still (so should modesty ever be rewarded!). Having once lapsed from the primordial purity of his nature, from his pristine carelessness, this unhappy man degenerated more and more. The meats were delicious, but care's black and acrid pepper spoiled them all; the wines were exquisite, but mingled with the black draughts of care they became horrible as that black broth which made the Spartans despise life and welcome brothless death,—for this is undoubtedly the true secret of the much-vaunted Spartan heroism. At length he could no longer refrain himself, and said to the host, Pray make your bill moderate! as if it mattered to him, who had no money at all and no prospect of any, whether the bill were moderate or not; as if indeed it is not far more honourable to owe a great aristocratic

amount than a petty peddling score! Hereupon the host seized a stick and cudgelled poor With-much-care nearly to death. He managed to escape and ran to the judge, before whom the host was brought likewise; and this worthy having listened with perfect composure to the plaint, responded: Every fellow deserves the same who violates our holy law of hospitality, calling for a bill from the man who has treated him well: one must have a sponge, not a heart, in his breast, to put up with such an outrage in his own house. Then the judge said to the complainant: Forget the blows, for you have deserved them, and yet heavier punishment. But if you would still live in our island, you must show yourself worthy and fit for a citizen. And the poor man answered: Alas! I never willingly took to work, I have no profitable abilities, I was mocked with the name of Without-care and driven from home: candidly confessing that he was exceedingly good for nothing, and had remarkable talents for doing the same; just in the spirit of the choice Irish song—

> I haven't a janius for work,
> It was never a gift o' the Gradys,
> But I'd make a most illigant Turk,
> I'm so fond o' the baccy and ladies.

Whereupon the judge informed him that he was the very man they wanted; that his consummate inabilities were of priceless value in their market; that he should stay among them a beloved and honoured guest, strenuously exerting his inertia, and living upon the very fat and mellowness of the land. You are most welcome, said this admirable judge. You shall have a post of honour at the feasts and a becoming place at the council. But beware that no shameful relapse ever makes you fall to work; let no one ever find oar or spade in your dwelling, else you will lose for ever maintenance and honour. But to sit in the market-

place with your arms folded over your goodly paunch, to hear the joyous songs of our minstrels, to watch the dances of the maidens and the sports of the boys, such are the duties you shall undertake and swear to perform. Our friend, whose moral nature had become rapidly rehabilitated during these noble judicial proceedings, accepted with cheerful fortitude the hard terms, and no doubt at once entered into lifelong amity with his host and all the other islanders of the same kidney, every chance of mutual misunderstanding being removed once for all. Surely happy and without care lived Without-care from that blessed day: and surely even now whoever touches at that island may see him strolling and lounging and laughing and chatting, ever-rosy, ever-sleek, ever-young; humming suavely in his sweet Italian: *O primavera, gioventù dell' anno! O gioventù, primavera della vita!* O Spring, the youth o' the year! O Youth, springtime of life!—fashioning the most joyous existence without tool or labour, just as dear God fashioned the world for the Golden Age. . . . And yet the story-teller made himself the hero of his story, and he was ragged, rhapsodising in Venice. What miracle divorced him from his beloved Utopia? Not the miracle, I opine, of having been found with any implement of drudgery in circumstances tainting him with the suspicion that he had been perverted into what the mean vulgar call useful employment of one's time. No: either the rhapsodist simply recounted the tale in the first person in order to make it the more interesting, and the real hero was another; or Utopia must have sunken, like Atlantis before it, and he only escaped alone to tell us thereof.

II.

THE second class of idlers are of the Hibernian type, and though very much resembling the first, resemble with

a difference. They are indolent enough by indolence itself, but indolent supremely by independence, a noble abhorrence of the iron bonds of law. Let dead machines work by rigid rules, they feel; a man should be free and easy to do what he likes when he likes, and whether he likes to do something or nothing. The fact that this high-minded independence usually makes them dependent on any and every body else, is but another illustration of the universal truth that extremes meet. The idlers of this class are not incapable of strenuous and even prolonged exertion, provided the exertion is thoroughly untainted by any useful or orderly purpose. They are born anti-utilitarians and antinomians, peculiarly precious in this age of stolid Bumbledom and monotonous routine. Thackeray writes in the *Irish Sketch Book:* "Half an hour's work, and digging a trench, might remove that filthy dunghill from that filthy window. The smoke might as well come out of the chimney as out of the door. Why should not Tim do *that*, instead of walking a hundred and sixty miles to a race?" "Do *what?*" asks Tim, who has imbibed just a toothful of grammar at the hedge or the national school; "come out of the chimney instead of the door? Bedad, I prefer to come out by the door." For my own part, I simply but sufficiently reply that digging a trench, removing a dunghill, and making a chimney are all useful and menial works, while walking to a race is pure gentlemanly sport with devil a bit of vulgar utility in it. Of this type also is the Gypsy indolence so well illustrated in George Borrow's "Romany Rye" (vol. i. 108): "You should learn to read, Jasper.—We have no time, brother.—Are you not frequently idle?—Never, brother; when we are not engaged in our traffic, we are engaged in our relaxation: so we have no time to learn."

Idlers of the third class are idle by grace; some by beauty

also, but still chiefly by grace. We should as soon expect the flowers to toil and spin as these. They may have no genius, no talent, no moral merit, nothing but this perfect endowment of grace in indolence; which is in itself ample justification for their being. You spend the evening with a large party; and who of all there gives you the greatest pleasure and is remembered as the charm of the meeting? Not the girl who sings so brilliantly, nor that other prestigious at the piano; not the full-maned scientific or nomadic or oriental lion of the assemblage; not the famous beauty or wit: it is some one, male or female, who says nothing, does nothing, and never has done anything, remarkable; who perhaps is quite plain in features and even ordinary in form; but who stands and sits and lounges in the most graceful (and perchance stupid!) serenity of self-possession. He or she is better than a fine picture or statue in the room, sweeter than sweet music; soothing our harassed minds with delicate perceptions of possible repose, exquisite suggestions of unperturbed and self-sufficient life. We recall the distich of Schiller:—

> Privileged rank obtains in the moral world; commonplace natures
> Pay us with that which they do, noble with that which they are.

Or, as I remember reading somewhere of one of them;—

> Look, as within some fair and princely hall
> The marble statue of a God may rest,
> Admired in silent reverence by all;
> Soothing the weary brain and anguished breast,
> By life's sore burthens all-too-much oppressed,
> With visions of tranquillity supreme;
> So, self-sufficing, grand and bland and blest,
> He dwelt enthroned, and whoso gazed did seem
> Endowed with death-calm life in long unwistful dream.

The most of us live bustling and panting, stung and worried

by sordid cares; the best of us burdened with heavy fads and stumbling at steep aspirations; each with an Old Man of the Sea on his shoulders, whom he can seldom make drunk enough to fall off, and who, unlike Sinbad's, remounts directly he is sober again: these ride no hobbies, neither are they ridden, nor doth black care sit behind them; they are always all that they are, and seek not to be more or otherwise; the infinitesimal Present they dilate into scope for full firm life, while we who can find in it no standing-place, straddle and totter with one foot on the Past that recedes and the other on the Future that advances. I must add that the indolence of this, as of the first class, is a gorgeous flower indigenous to the exuberant tropics, seldom coming to perfection in the bleak and murky open air of our clime. Our richest conservatories conserve a few magnificent specimens, but only with enormous cost and care. Ah, if we had the climate of Naples I wonder how many of us, now respectable plodding citizens, would be shameless *lazzaroni!* If one could be filled all day with sunshine as with wine, and all night with warm moonlight as with nectar; if a bit of bread with some melon or oranges sufficed one for food, and rags were not only picturesque but airily comfortable, and an open marble portico made a luxurious couch; do you think it would be worth one's while to toil and moil for the mere sake of respectability? O solid and potent Bumble, and thou straitlaced Mrs. Grundy, his dearest friend (may Scandal never blur with her foul breath the crystal purity of your *liaison!*), I warn you, essay not the tour of Italy! for if Vesuvius burnt you not to ashes, you would be drowned beyond redemption in the tideless sea; in you above all other creatures would the proverb be fulfilled, See Naples and then die. Keep at home, I implore you, wrapt safe and sound in the rains, mists, fogs, frosts, sleet, hail and snows, which are congenial to you if

not to anybody else. Even in this swarthy London, your metropolis, a single week of fervour and fulgence (and we generally get one in the course of the year) melteth away the energy of the most energetic, demoralises the most austere, stirs scorn of conventionality and routine in the weakest and meekest, yea, maketh us all vagabonds and gypsies at heart.

Idlers of the fourth class are idle by Fortune in the best sense, and are closely related to the preceding. They appear willing to work, but there is I know not what subtlest delusion in the appearance, since it always happens that Nature and Circumstance step in between, and do the work for them, giving them all the ripe results free from care and toil. Emerson, in his poem entitled *Guy*, has well sketched the happy lot of one of these true favourites of the true Fortune:—

> In the street, if he turned round,
> His eye the eye 'twas seeking found . . .
> Early or late, the falling rain
> Arrived in time to swell his grain;
> Stream could not so perversely wind,
> But corn of Guy's was there to grind;
> The whirlwind found it on its way
> To speed his sails, or dry his hay;
> And the world's sun seemed to rise
> To drudge all day for Guy the wise.

The men of this class must by no means be confounded with the vulgar favourites of the vulgar fortune; their patron is the divine Fortune of the ancients and of Dante (*Inferno*, vii.): "Who provides, judges, and maintains her kingdom, as the other gods do theirs; who is blessed, and with the other primal creatures glad revolves her sphere, and blessed joys herself." But the minions of vulgar fortune, having no constitutional right to their inheritance of leisure, and knowing not how to do nothing, make a most weary and heart-

sickening business of what they call pleasure, and are truly not idlers at all; for of all mills of drudgery the meanest and hardest to swink at is the treadmill of Fashion.

The idlers of the fifth class are often mistaken for most industrious men, seeing that they accomplish far more work and of far higher quality than common people however busy. For while possessed by the plenary genius of indolence, they are possessed of vigorous faculties which they employ perforce for the needs of life. Thus they alternately "toil terribly" and bask in Oriental repose. Their works may be very great, yet their indolence is much greater than all their works. The test to apply to the doubtful ones is very simple: Do they idle in order to work, or work in order to idle? Do they rest for the sake of their labour, or labour for the sake of their rest? Is their sloth but a refreshment for new toil, or is their toil but the heavy price they are forced to pay for their sloth? Apply this test thoroughly, and see how many of your heroes of activity prove paragons of indolence. Dr. Johnson, who did so much work of various kinds, including that dreadful seven years' penal servitude on the Dictionary, is a good sample of those of this type who are men of talent, and we should not have known what a sluggard he really was had not his life been written by Boswell. Shakespeare is the grand exemplar of those who are men of genius; yet two hundred and fifty years after his death, we have simpletons wondering how he could refrain from producing immortal dramas in the very prime of his powers, and having acquired a competency, go away to live at ease as a shrewd comfortable burgess in his native town! Why, had he been born to a fortune, it is most likely that he never would have taken the trouble to produce a serious drama, always supposing that he would not have wasted his substance as a merry young spark, and so fallen (as really he rose) into acting and play-writing for

his independence. Do you think that his intellect was not healthy and opulent enough to rest contented in itself, without hungering and thirsting after the applause of the multitude, for whose taste and judgment he had so righteous a contempt? In Sonnet cxi., in what Theseus says of the drama in the last act of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, and in other passages of his works, we may read what scorn, acrid with the bitter repugnance of wounded self-esteem, he felt for the trade into which he had been driven by the force of circumstance, and from which he retired as soon as he conveniently could. Hafiz, Sir Walter Scott, Rossini, and many other fertile geniuses might be cited as manifestly belonging to this class, either working simply for their own amusement, that is, really playing at work, or to win the money which buys unanxious leisure. In the latter case they recall the Enceladus of Keats, most furious of the Titans in war and disaster, because the most placid in peace and prosperity;

> ——Once tame and mild
> As grazing ox unworried in the meads;
> Now tiger-passion'd, lion-thoughted, wroth;

when the breese-flies of hot life have stung them from their ruminant repose. And while they are toiling terribly, their bitterest regret and their dearest aspiration are for such days as those whose loss pained Enceladus more than the loss of realms—

> The days of peace and slumberous calm are fled.

Their energies when roused are intense in proportion to their natural tranquillity. Working for amusement, and even working for money in the case of some choice spirits whose whole life floats gently onward folded in a stream of lucid reverie, they work as the Ali Bey of Heine fought. Serene in his harem he enjoys the caresses and blandish-

ments of his women, odalisques lovely as houris and lithe as gazelles, who give him a foretaste of Paradise; when suddenly the alarm of an Infidel assault perturbs his beatitude, and he must forth to meet the foe. No doubt he smites the more fiercely to avenge his interrupted bliss and the sooner regain it; yet he rides and fights as in a dream, feeling still in the embraces of his women; and while shearing down Christian heads by the dozen, he smiles as one enamoured, smiling soft and tenderly.

Those of the sixth class are idlers chiefly by profound and continual thought. They see clearly that the consequences of any act are infinite in number, and quite incalculable in their ultimate results, however obvious may be the main immediate effect; they know that there is as much to urge for either of two opposite or divergent courses of action as for the other, and generally more to urge for taking neither and resting still; they have remarked how fatally one step leads to a long unintended journey, compelling the steps that follow, so that Napoleon starting for Brienne cannot pause till he reaches St. Helena; they have learned that the very best acts are but rough and rude incarnations of thought: so they preserve a wise indifference, and do as little as possible; thanking Heaven for its grace when they happen to have been sound asleep during the desperate emergencies which make all their neighbours daft for the time. Every day brings some rogue or dupe bawling that the fateful crisis of something supremely important is upon us; yet the world swings along its old easy course without friction or jolting or noise, and there is nothing to make a fuss about except the fuss itself that has been so foolishly made. And these men likewise know well that most if not all work is really idle. As Leopardi says (*Canti: Al Conte Carlo Pepoli*): "Life is all idleness in every human condition, if it is proper to call idle such

works and pursuits as are without worthy object, or can never attain that object." And again (*Detti Memorabili di Filippi Ottonieri*): "He allowed no distinction between business and amusement, and always when he had been occupied with anything, however grave, said he had been amusing himself." These men are active in the quiescent sphere of thought, which with the highest among them floats in supernal mystic contemplation. This profound indolence, like that of the preceding class, can best be studied by the few fit to study it, in the few very great works or records of the men endowed with it.

III.

THOSE of the seventh class are idlers chiefly by faith. Providence has the world in hand, and will doubtless make the best of it that can be made: shall one flurry and meddle and muddle to improve this and extinguish that, as if he were wiser and better than Providence? Is the orange not round enough, because less smooth and spherical than a billiard ball? In the vast and complicate chess of life we cannot see the whole board or comprehend the whole game; we hurriedly move a pawn out of peril, and perchance thus expose queen or king. The men of this class cannot but laugh quietly at the hot fevers of philanthropy and propagandism, at all the wild isms with good intentions raging and roaring around them. For Bible and Missionary Societies they have little or no respect; they hear with a serene smile the doleful lamentations and urgent exhortations of good fussy little men, who profess to believe that an almighty, all-good God made the world, and overrules its destinies, and yet preach that it is in so miserable a state that if they, the said good fussy little men, don't exert

themselves prodigiously, and get others to do the like, it must soon go to the Devil. Against these idlers by faith may be urged what Lisbeth urged against Seth Bede: that for all she could see, the only result of Seth's taking no care of the morrow was that Adam had to take care of it for both. But this was really an advantage, as Lisbeth would doubtless have perceived had she ever experienced the inestimable benefit of going through a course of moral philosophy; for it furnished gratis to the man who had a talent for taking care of the morrow another object on which to employ this talent, another field for his plough, thus at least doubling the scope of his life; while from the man who had no talent for such care it removed any need for the exercise thereof, so leaving him free to follow the bent of his nature. Nor can there be any doubt that the conduct of Seth Bede was in direct conformity with the injunctions of the Gospel, while that of Adam savoured of carnal self-sufficiency, trust in his own forethought, and distrust of that universal Providence which is written with a capital P. Let me note that the faith which is the root of indolence in this class may be of despair instead of assurance, of pessimism instead of optimism. It may be a profound and immutable belief in the absolute tyranny of blind Fate, in the utter vanity of all efforts to assuage or divert the operation of the inexorable laws of the universe. The difference, however, as regards our subject, is intellectual merely, not essential. The spiritual root is the same in both, though the one bears blossoms of mystical ravishment under the heaven of Providence, and the other dark leaves of oracular Stoicism under the iron vault of Destiny. Extremes meet; always, extremes meet.

I have not space for a similar classification of the energetic, but may just observe that they would fall under categories severally corresponding to the above, for it

cannot be too often repeated that extremes meet: the man who moils all his life, for the mere sake of moiling, is twin-brother of him who never willingly does anything, for the mere sake of doing nothing; as Spinoza, who secludes himself in the profoundest quietism of meditation, is twin-brother of Marcus Aurelius, who sways a vast empire and is ever occupied with his social duties.

Inadequate as is the above classification from the philosophical point of view, it may serve to make us pause ere we either condemn or praise any one for indolence. His indolence may be worthy of condemnation (if indeed anything in any man can be worthy of condemnation by any other man or by himself); or it may be the quietude of a spirit cherishing profound thought, supreme faith, ideal beauty. Speaking down to our common tea-table level of morality, since on no other level is the world likely to heed or hear a word one says, and leaving aside the drudgery for daily bread, I would put it that on the one hand no indolence is to be praised which involves conscious shirking and sneaking, with fear more or less definite of the consequences; and on the other hand no industry is to be praised which involves fussing and fuming, and usurps dominion over the general nature of the worker. And we must note that much the greater part of what we term work is mere self-seeking activity, neither noble, nor just, nor wise, nor thorough, and has no moral right to contemn any indolence. Passing over the multitude of wealth-making rogues, how many large fortunes are grubbed together meanly, though honestly and respectably, by years of purblind selfish toil, unwarmed by a spark of generous feeling, unlighted by a gleam of liberal thought! Nor must it be forgotten that in our time and country we have a plague of busy-bodyism, certainly more annoying and perhaps more noxious than the plague of idleness.

One comes across many earnest and energetic characters (restless "time-phantasms that reckon themselves real") who are no longer men but simply machines for working out their "missions" (as fads and hobbies are now grandly entitled); who are always in a hurry and bluster, and believe that hurry and bluster are the sole symptoms (if not, rather, essential motive-powers) of active progress; who are quite unable to settle for a time in tranquillity, having a notion that if they pause, the world must come to a full stop; who are sure that every step is a step in advance, though the quiet looker-on can see that nine-tenths of their movement is that of a squirrel in its revolving cage; who are continually vehement about some imminent crisis, as if life like birth or death were but an agony of throes and convulsions; who often whirl away in their rushing tumult modest people far superior to themselves in sense and judicious activity; who claim sympathy for their exhaustion when there has been no need for them to exhaust themselves, and admiration for their indomitable energy when its application has been altogether perverse. Except in those rare cases when sudden supreme emergencies demand supreme raptures of uncalculated toil, I admire the work of no man who is not working within himself, superior to his work. And it seems to me that in our England of to-day there is more peril to be feared from overwork than from underwork, of course leaving out of the case those who can get no work at all; that more are ruined by overwrought faculties than by faculties rusting through disuse. We have adopted in a drudging sense the maxim of Macchiavel, Better repent having done than not having done. The desperate toil demands desperate stimulants and sedatives, and thus tends to extreme dissipation and profligacy. As cool Goethe observes, Unlimited activity, of whatever kind, ends in bankruptcy.

If we appeal to Memory, whose judgments are supposed to be in accordance with the law as laid down by Conscience, we find that her verdicts differ remarkably from what common talk would lead us to expect. Which among our school days and nights do we recall with most satisfaction? Those wherein we learned much, or solved hard problems, or were publicly praised for our diligence, or took some coveted prize from many competitors? Not at all; but those wherein we played truant, or tricked the master, or violated good discipline by a bolstering match, or carried out a foray on an orchard. If you affirm that the chief element of delight in such retrospects is not the indolence but the lawlessness, the insurrection of our wild free nature against the stark pedantry of rules, I reply that the lawlessness cannot be separated from the indolence, and that this very lawlessness, which has been pointed out as the dominant characteristic of the second or Irish type, is an essential element in every species of indolence; it is human nature lying down in a protest of "masterly inactivity" against the bitter old curse, In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread.

Or let us take an instance or two from art. Indolence, like love, of which it is the foster-mother, if not the very mother, inspires the dullest man with genius for a time. The genius of two of our poets has culminated in its celebration. Jamie Thomson, of most peaceful and blessed memory, was indeed constrained in deference to public opinion (besides that he always had a turn for preaching, owing perhaps to his early training) to adduce frightful admonitions and warnings, and make the vulgar moral as clear as a copy-book text in round hand; yet the initiated reader divines and knows well that the end of the first and all the second Canto are but dragon-haunted wood and

marsh to affray the crowd, and secure the solitude for those who have the talisman of entry into that serenest Castle of Indolence, "which he has made the House Beautiful, so that all who pass are fain to tarry therein." And the *Lotus Eaters* is so decidedly the best work of our weak and exquisite Tennyson, that it will preserve his fame as an almost great poet when the hysterics and commonplace philosophy of his *Maud* and *In Memoriam* have passed out of memory, when all his Idylls are idle on the shelf, when nothing else of his save a few tender lyrics and fragments of description shall be cared for by the general public. Now let us take a poem, or at any rate a piece of verse, devoted to energy and perseverance. The sublime *Excelsior* is very popular at present; but I doubt whether any man (soft curates, Sunday-school teachers, and tea-meeting muffs who think beer and tobacco certain perdition, are of course not included) ever read the adventures of its lofty hero without ejaculating, The Ineffable Ass! The Infernal Idiot! And I should like to know what that maiden fair and free, who at first sight tendered such a handsome invitation, really thought of him when he preferred snow and ice to the pillow of her warm bosom, the imbecile *casto Giuseppe!* What possible good could he do himself or anybody else by planting that banner with the very strange device on the top of that mountain? Well, he perished; and I trust that the coroner's jury found a verdict of Serve him right.

We all know, or ought to know, the story of that dauntless philosopher and martyr, Giordano Bruno. His fiery nature would not let him rest, and his restlessness brought him to the prison, the rack, and finally to the stake. If he could only have kept quiet he might have become a prelate, a cardinal, even a pope and a saint, instead of being "punished as gently as possible, and without effusion of blood," as

tender-hearted Mother Church phrased it when she burned her dear children alive. He knew well the inestimable value of that inertia or supreme repose which was denied to him; and in his *Spaccio de la Bestia Trionfante,* or Expulsion of the Triumphant Beast, introduces Indolence nobly vindicating herself before the assembly of the gods (I transcribe from the French of Christian Bartholmèss, not having the Italian original): "It was I, she said, who created the Golden Age, that marvellous time when beneficent Nature offered to the calmest spirits an infinite abundance of apples, chestnuts, acorns, and roots. It was Industry who put an end to this epoch in filling the earth by her fallacious arts with novelties and disorders, and in urging minds and hands to ambitious and corrupting enterprises. Enemy of quietude, she seduces men by false promises, by the phantom of a glory remote and detestable; while I sweetly invite them to enjoy the present. It is I whom Jupiter gave for companion to the first couple, while they were still good; as soon as they became bad they had no other society than that of Labour and Industry. It is I who protected innocence; it is Industry who is the ally of sin. In fine, O gods! hear this invincible sorites: The gods are gods because they are perfectly happy; the happy are happy because they have neither fatigue nor pain; those have neither pain nor fatigue who do not stir or change; now, to live with Indolence is the sure method of avoiding change or stir; therefore the gods are gods because they have Indolence in their midst."

But I remember that it has been noted how the old knights errant, what with fasts and vigils, freezings and scorchings, gashes and mutilations, seemed bent on making themselves as ugly as possible in the service of Beauty; and in like manner I am in danger of growing preposter-

ously industrious in the service of Indolence.' Let me then conclude straightway with Lessing in his fragment of an ode:—

PRAISE OF INDOLENCE.

Indolence, I will to thee
  Some small song of praise now bring;
Oh—it—sorely—troubles me—
  Thy—great—worth—to fitly sing!
Yet I'll try to do my best;
After labour comes sweet rest.

Highest Good! who has but thee,
  Who untroubled life doth live—
Ah!—I—yawn—tired out—you see—
  So—you—really—must forgive—
For how can I sing your lay
While you kiss my breath away!

A NATIONAL REFORMER IN THE DOG-DAYS.

1869.

—o—

I.

THE glass registers between 90° and 100° in the shade, and a trifle under boiling point in the sun; and the savage Editor demands copy! There is not a cloud in the blue and burning sky—

[Having written thus far on a certain July morning, the National Reformer's feelings overcame him, and he broke down. But remembering pretty well his mental soliloquy during those torrid hours, he wrote it out several months afterwards, ready for the next dog-days, knowing well that he would be quite incompetent to do so in the dog-days themselves.]

There is not a cloud in the blue and burning sky; only a pearly and creamy vapour about the horizon. There is little or no breeze; the air is too indolent to stir. The sun flames down with a certain malignancy of splendour. Body and soul I am limp and fuming as a boiled rag, fit for nothing but to take off my flesh and loll in my bones and sip iced claret-cup; and the barbarous Editor is urgent for copy! In private life it is perhaps not absolutely impossible

for an Editor to be a mild and decent man; but officially, as an Editor, and an Editor in want of copy, he is unscrupulous, atrocious, ferocious, inexorable. Young lions roaring for prey, tigers foraging for their famishing cubs, wolves snow-starved out of their mountain forests, pike in a fishpond, sharks in the ocean, vultures and condors in the air, each and all are tame, meek, self-denying, merciful wild animals, compared with an Editor in want of copy. For copy he would sacrifice all else that is dear to him; expose his friends, tell stories about his father and mother, deliver to the insatiate public his wife and children, violate the sacred follies of his own old love-letters, comment freely on her Majesty the Queen, sneer at our holy Church, cast pearls of truth to Bumble, do anything and everything desperate and diabolical. And the frightfullest part of the matter is, that the Editor of a journal must be always in want of copy, and the Editor of a weekly nearly always. Scarcely is the one number gorged and crammed, than the next opens out yawning blank pages ravenous to get filled. Well does Balzac, in his "Illusions Perdues," remark on the infernal irony with which copy has been derived from the Latin *copia*, which means abundance!

Lo! our Editor strideth stalwart in the van of the Army of Progress, brandishing his pen as a keen lance, sharpening his tongue as a trenchant sword, waving on high as the banner of the hopes of Humanity the last broadsheet of this noble periodical, brave words *azure* on a field *argent*. Verily, warlike and splendid as the array of Duke Theseus by Chaucer besung:—

> The red statúe of Mars with spere and targe
> So shineth in his whité banner large
> That all the feldés gliteren up and doun.

And poor I, who now droop and collapse, am a fraction of

the staff of that magnificent banner. How he shouteth insistant and threatful as thunder, summoning all the contributors to send in their copy, their separate long thin streamers which, joined together, form the one broad standard. Copy! My body is boiled and my brain is baked, and you might knock me down with a thunderbolt; I have not an idea in my head (except iced claret-cup), and if I had, I couldn't take the trouble to find words for its expression; and if I could, I should not have enough physical strength to wield the pen.

With the courage of despair I defy the Editor. I do not refuse to contribute, for why exert one's self in a refusal? I simply refrain and keep quiet. O implacable one! did you ever read how a certain Federal officer in the great American War (who most likely had no business in the rear himself) discovered a poor devil prostrate far behind while battle was raging in front, and called out, Hallo there! are you dead? And the warrior faintly moaned, No. Are you wounded? No. What the hell is the matter with you, then? I am utterly demoralised. Deeply do I sympathise with that poor devil of a warrior, for indeed I am myself in precisely the like case.

Or did you never, O implacable one! read the wise words of the poet?—

> Who but a fool of his free will
> Would write mere prose, or well or ill,
> Of his free will would write mere prose
> During the season of the rose?
> None but a fool would thus write prose } (*bis.*)
> During the season of the rose.

Although I would make an exception in favour of any one who could write prose like Garth Wilkinson or Ruskin, George Eliot or George Meredith. And these rosy rhymes remind me of a certain noble weaver of Bagdad, who

flourished soon after the time of Haroon-el-Rasheed. Mr. Lane, in the notes to the "Arabian Nights," tells us of him :—"He was constantly employed at his loom every day in the year, even during the congregational prayers of Friday, excepting in the rose-season, when he abandoned his work, and gave himself up to the enjoyment of wine, early in the morning and late in the evening, loudly proclaiming his revels by singing—

'The season has become pleasant! The time of roses is come! Take your morning potations as long as the rose has blossoms and flowers!'

When he resumed his work, he made it known by singing aloud—

'If my Lord prolong my life until the rose-season I will take again my morning potations: but if I die before it, alas, for the loss of the rose and wine!

'I implore the God of the supreme throne, whose glory be extolled; that my heart may continually enjoy the evening potations to the day of resurrection.'

The Khaleefeh (El-Ma-moon) was so amused with the humour of this man, that he granted him an annual pension of *ten thousand dirhems*, to enable him to enjoy himself amply on these occasions." * Mr. Lane takes this from Halbet-el-Kumeyt, a most choice and jolly book in Arabic concerning wine and wine-drinkers, which I cordially recommend to yourself and all your readers.

O excellent weaver! whom I will venture to name Mesroor, which meaneth Happy! (Although he thus named in the "Arabian Nights" could not have been wholly blest.) In my little reading of history I have come across many saints and sages, many poets and heroes; but few indeed whom I love and esteem as I love and esteem you. Not a

* Now £250 (Lane); then much more! E. S. Poole reckons dirhem equal to franc instead of sixpence.

hundred years ago we had a young fellow up in Ayrshire who could have dressed the flax for your weaving, who would have drunk with you and sung with you early in the morning and late in the night during all the rich rose-season. But I fear me he met with more thistles than roses; and I cannot call him Mesroor or Happy whose name was Robert Burns. He would have been a comrade after your own heart; a large sweet nature full of generous vitality and joyous humour. Our Khaleefeh Jee-orj did not give him a pension of ten thousand dirhems to enable him to enjoy himself amply; he was made a gauger to repress the distillation of the liquor he loved so well, and he died haunted with terrors of the jail. So much is our Christian civilisation superior to your Mohammedan barbarism of a thousand years ago.

But I digress. O urgent and ferocious Editor! the march of progress is a noble march, but dreadfully toilsome in summer; the pathway of progress is a noble path, but stifling with dust in the dog-days; the army of progress is a noble army, but it panteth and sweateth in July. For awhile I must suspend my march, stray out of the path, straggle from the army. It appears to me that we are on a green bluff overlooking a wide bay and wider offing. The march winds down to the shore and round the curve of the bay. If I rest here in the moist blue shadow of these noble trees, I shall command a fine view of the progress, a fine view of the swaying sea, that slanted plane of liquid light; and surely the cool sea-air will refresh me a little.

Beloved comrades and brothers of the army of progress, how gallant you look as you march farther and farther from my resting-place! While I toiled among you it required vigorous reflection on the grandeur of our enterprise to make the march endurable. I was panting and sweating, you were panting and sweating; some were treading on

others' heels; we were jostling, straggling, drooping, limping, grumbling, cursing; mouths full of gritty dust uttered hoarse sighs for beer: the army was always heroic and noble, yet we the units seemed weak and ignoble. But now, O beloved brothers! getting more and more remote ye show more and more magnificent; all the petty ignominious details are lost, the sweating and panting personalities are merged in the integral grandeur of the column, a long dark line of valiant manhood marching on to fight and to conquer all that is evil, a serried band of sacred brotherhood, the Forlorn Hope unforlorn of Humanity; and when a trumpet-swell circles faintly to my ear, with its utmost audible circlings, it is chivalric as that fabled blast of Roland at Roncesvalles, it stirs my heart to indomitable resolution, my pulse leaps with valour and enthusiasm, and I cry with rapture: March on, march on, O beloved comrades and brothers, charge the ranks of the foe, storm his fortresses, shrink not from heat and fatigue, reck not for hunger and thirst; while I repose here admiring and applauding you, in the cool blue shadow, upon the bladed glass, under the rustling branch-borne foliage: my heart is with you, O my brothers, my soul is plumed with swift love to pursue you when vision falls short; I will rest here that I may the better meditate and realise and acclaim your daring and devotion.

So I dreamingly rest by the seashore while our army winds out of sight. Were it not well to plunge in the green wash of the bay, and get the black dust out of one's throat and eyes and nostrils, the plaster of sweat and dust off one's face? Surely it were well. Sweet is the sharp brine; cool, strong and buoyant the earth-embracing sea. I will shout unto the waves with Walt Whitman, the hearty sea-bather,

> Cushion me soft, rock me in billowy drowse;
> Dash me with amorous wet.

II.

Suddenly I bethink me that the poor flax-dressing peasant-lad above-mentioned did write out the rules of a certain Tarbolton Bachelors' Club, composed of lads poor as himself, and that the last of those rules began thus: "Every man proper for a member of this Society must have a frank, honest, open heart, above anything dirty or mean; *and must be a professed lover of one or more of the female sex.*" See the generous genius in that "one or more"! Who can wonder that such a Bachelors' Club lived for years, to the great intellectual and moral improvement of its members? Oh! for a damsel gentle and joyous to share with me this pleasant shade; that I might impart unto her the histories of our warfare; tell her of the glorious enterprises on which you, my brothers, are disappearing from ken; fill her with the enthusiasm of Humanity, the sacred love of Mankind. What says Milton in that eloquent jumble of heady grief, which perhaps, however, had some heart in it,—the dirge of Lycidas?—

> Alas! what boots it with incessant care
> To tend the homely, slighted, shepherd's trade,
> And strictly meditate the thankless Muse?
> Were it not better done, as others use,
> To sport with Amaryllis in the shade,
> Or with the tangles of Neæra's hair?

Were it not better done? O Milton, could you really hesitate a moment as to the answer? Was the Puritanic ossification already so far advanced in you? Were it not better done, indeed! Surely it were a thousand times better done, a myriad times better done. For, as another poet sings—

Better the love of a woman you love,
Better a myriad times,
Than all the fame that ever came
From grandest prose or rhymes.

Of the homely, slighted, shepherd's trade, I know next to nothing; which is perhaps nearly as much as the author of "Lycidas" knew; but if it is at all like any other common trade, out upon it! The Muse I have in my time strictly meditated; and have certainly found her much more thankless than ever did John Milton;—except when he made God and the Son of God, not to speak of an archangel or two, prose in the blankest of verse the most wretched and incongruous theological sophistries, like a dreary and bitter pair of cantankerous old Calvinistics. And for the rest, if Amaryllis be altogether too deep in the shade, and the tangles of Neæra's hair have long since curled off in vapour or mouldered entangled in the dust, there are plenty of girls as good as ever they were to replace them. Some Irish darling, with great black eyes, and thick black shining locks "crisped like a war-steed's encolure," and strong white teeth flashing between liberal laughing lips; some yellow-haired lassie, with eyes of limpid heavenly blue, and bosom swelling from its boddice like a lovely white bud from its sheath; some English maiden with rich brown hair and soft brown eyes, and mouth as sweet as a dewy rose: who can sigh for Amaryllis or Neæra, while all or one of these may be met?

But the rearmost of the band of my brothers are vanishing in the blue distance. Is it not sad to be left alone? How shall I, the demoralised, ever overtake them? Were it not well simply to let them overtake me? they marching on, and I valiantly resting, until again we can embrace. For whether they march to the rising or setting sun, to the Southern Cross or the Great Northern Bear, it is certain

that if they march on long enough unswerving they will at length come round to this very same pleasant spot again. Extremes always meet; and the farther I linger behind them, the nearer are they to overtaking me. Was it a blunder or oversight of Providence? was it a deep design of Nature? surely it is beneficent for us weaklings that all our progress must move in a circle, or other curve ever returning into itself, not onward in a right line. For, perpend. If from the beginning human progress had been straight forward, instead of circular on this apple-shaped earth; the most energetic getting far in advance, and therefore only mingling and marrying with the most energetic like themselves, and thus by the laws of selection and inheritance having offspring ever more and more energetic and go-ahead; and, similarly, the most sluggish lagging far behind with their like, and breeding children ever more and more sluggish and slow; it is clear that in the course of some millenniums the poor human race would have been represented by a thin, forlorn, often broken line, with knots here and there, stretching for billions and quadrillions of miles through the homeless immensities of space. For instance, try to conceive the vastitudes which, on these conditions, in the course of one poor thousand years, would divide Quarterly Reviewers and Westminster Reviewers, Saturday Reviewers and National Reformers, each set breeding in and in! Infinity itself would scarcely give scope enough for the unbridled protension of our career. But, as it is, the most advanced are kept amongst the most backward, and our whole species is snugly packed and housed on this pleasant and homely little orb. Thus the human race may be fitly compared to a ten-mile race, which, for the convenience of spectators and umpires and referee, and for the greater profit of the knowing landlord who gets it up, is run round a course of a third of a mile; thirty times round, the

tenth mile just as fully in sight as the first. You see two men pushing on abreast, but the one is really a long lap in front of the other; a man leading a second by some yards, the fact being that the leader is a whole lap less those yards behind the led; a third half-way between other two, he being actually the rest of the course in advance of the one in front, and the rest of the course in rear of the one behind; and so on through other apparent contradictions, as the ingenious will easily imagine. Thus are we of the human race all kept together on our cosy spherule, thus the energetic are kept commingled with the slothful, each tempering the other; and thus, which is the most important consideration, are all the reforming natures kept among all the poor creatures who need reform.

Therefore, my beloved and admirable comrades, I will not grieve that you have progressed beyond my vision; our separation is but for a brief period; you will come up behind me from the underworld, even as you just now disappeared before me into it. Perhaps by the time you rejoin me, I shall have recovered the strength and vigour which will enable me to accompany you, to march in your ranks even in the dog-days. And assuredly I will use the interval of rest to chant the praises of your valour and fortitude; panegyrics and high pæans which I had not the leisure to compose, or the voice to sing, while marching and fighting myself. It is a fair division of labour and fortune. Yours shall be the noble action, and mine the hymn that celebrates it; yours the deed, and mine the emotion which the deed inspires in a serene looker-on who has leisure to indulge in sentiment. For surely the courage and endurance of the warrior merit the proud praises of the bard; yea, even though the warfare can do no good to the warrior himself or to any one else. Nor shall I envy you, my brothers, for that when you rejoin me you will be a whole lap, or great

earth-circle, before me in the race. I am meek and modest, and never was ambitious; and shall be quite content so long as I can march in your company, and enjoy your sweet society, to know that you are all in reality too far advanced for me ever to overtake you.

So I rest and dream, and imagine my leal and valiant comrades marching and fighting far ahead, and wait placidly until they shall show themselves here again; and in the meanwhile the dog-days, the vast, slow, sultry and burning hours flow over me; and I get what refreshment and shadow I can from the sea and in the sea, and on green grass under green leafage, and in the unperturbed depths of coolest contemplation. And if only lass or lassie or maiden will soon come by and bear me company, so much the better. And as for the ferocious and insatiable Editor roaring and howling for copy, let me blandly remind him yet again of the sage words of the poet:

> Who but a fool of his free will
> Would write mere prose, or well or ill,
> Of his free will would write mere prose
> During the season of the rose?
> None but a fool would thus write prose
> During the season of the rose.

Whereof the concluding distich is to be repeated with redoubled damnatory emphasis.

AN EVENING WITH SPENSER.

1865.

—o—

In the tenth canto of the first Book of the "Faerie Queene," we have the description of the House of Holiness. The Redcross Knight has been snared in the toils of Duessa, and has endured long captivity in a deep dungeon of the castle of Orgoglio; and is so weak and wasted that in the ninth canto he would have slain himself with the dagger put into his hand by Despair (the most eloquent despair, I think, that has ever spoken in our language) had not Una interfered to save him. Seeing that he is altogether too feeble and faint for the combat with the dragon, Una brings him to this House of Holiness to be cheered and cherished and restored. The description of the ladies of the house, Cœlia, Fidelia, Speranza, Charissa, of their attendants and servitors, and of the discipline whereby a diseased soul is gradually cured and stablished in godly health, is so beautiful and so true to the most catholic spirituality—rather Theistic than Christian—that even an undevout reader, an "infidel," must study it with delight and hold it in reverence. In no portion of his great work, not excepting the narratives of knightly combats or the pictures of lovely ladies and ornate artificial landscapes so comparatively easy to accom-

plish, does Spenser show a more thorough mastery of the subject in hand. Here as everywhere else there is no indecision, no panting or straining for effect, no hurry or slurring; no sign, in short, that the strength and knowledge and wisdom of the mighty master are not abundant and superabundant for the enterprise he has undertaken: he royally dominates his theme; a magnificent equable composure reigns throughout. Mr. Ruskin (and no man better loves and appreciates Spenser) has found fault with the Anchor of Hope; and I think Mr. Ruskin's objection to the emblem is reasonable; but Spenser did not invent it; he was surely right in adopting the universally received symbol of this virtue, in an age when all the virtues and all the legions of the saints were severally distinguished by certain symbols and accessories in Art, as clearly and constantly as noble families by their escutcheons in heraldry.* And it may be remarked that in using the inevitable anchor, Spenser makes it as light and unreal as possible; for Speranza *carries the anchor* whereon, or rather whereover, she leans:

> Upon her arme a silver anchor lay,
> Whereon she leanèd ever, as befell.

How different is this attitude of Hope, how slight is the weight of the anchor in the characterisation, as compared with the ordinary delineation, with the common pictures and statues of which Keats was thinking when he wrote massively of Asia in *Hyperion:*

* See *Hebrews* vi. 19, whence the symbol: "Which *hope* we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which entereth into that within the veil." The marginal reference here is exceedingly good: if you are puzzled by an anchor entering into that within the veil, look to *Lev.* xvi. 15, and you will learn that within the veil was the blood of a goat and of a bullock sprinkled upon the mercy-seat. This blood was the sea into which the anchor was cast, the mercy-seat was the bottom it grappled, and the soul of man was a ship sailing on a surface considerably above the temple.

> Even as Hope upon her anchor leans,
> So leant she, not so fair, upon a tusk
> Shed from the broadest of her elephants.

Minute criticism might more fairly object to the twenty-sixth stanza, that such regimen, such dieting with fasting every day, although undoubtedly proper in most cases, could scarcely be required in the case of the Redcross Knight, who was so weak and ill chiefly because he had dieted with fasting all the days of his captivity: and, in fact, the second stanza tells us that Una's purpose was to cherish him with diets daint.

For my purpose in this little paper, however, I need only call attention to stanzas 53 and 54, wherein the hill from which Heavenly Contemplation showed the Knight the New Hierusalem, is compared to Mount Sinai, to the Mount of Olives, and to Parnassus; Moses and Jesus and the nine Muses being mentioned as all alike really existing: to stanzas 57 to 59, wherein the City of the Great King, the New Hierusalem, and Cleopolis the capital of the Faerie Queene, and Panthea that bright tower, are compared as if also all alike really existing: and, finally, to stanzas 60 to 76 wherein Heavenly Contemplation quite naturally and seriously turns from pointing out the celestial glories to inform the Knight that he is indeed of sound English blood, although having been stolen when an infant by a faery, he has been brought up in Faerie Land and is accounted a faery's son; and predicts that he shall become a saint, and be known to aftertimes as Saint George, the patron saint of merry England.*

* The last line of Stanza 42 is noteworthy:

> Ah, dearest God, me graunt, I dead be not defould!

Here is the very prayer of Shakespeare's epitaph, and expressed with the like remarkable impassioned intensity. How has this Oriental reverence for the corpse, while still strong in the poor and ignorant, become so weak in

In the sixth canto of the third Book, the birth of the twins Belphœbe and Amoretta having been related, we enter the Garden of Adonis wherein the latter was brought up under the care of Psyche; Psyche for ever reconciled with Cupid, and by him the mother of Pleasure. The poetry here is as divinely beautiful as the myths of Venus and Adonis, of Cupid and Psyche. Especially, the first two lines of stanza 42, as marking the transition from the more philosophic to the more romantic aspect of the garden, are lovely beyond appraisal and praise:

> There is continuall spring, and harvest there
> Continuall, both meeting at one time.

But I chiefly wish to call attention to the bold Platonism of the first or more philosophic part of the description (stanzas 30 to 38). I use the word Platonism, not in the now ordinary vague sense with which it is applied to any doctrines of an idealistic (modern idealism as opposed to materialism is Platonic realism as opposed to nominalism) or spiritual tendency, but in its full meaning of the actual philosophy of the great heathen, as we have it in the *Phædo* and the *Phædrus* and the *Timæus*. This Garden of Adonis is the seminary of all earthly creatures; in it naked souls (*babes*, Spenser calls them) await their investiture in fleshly weeds, and are invested as eternal fate ordains; having lived a life upon the earth, they return and are planted in the garden once more, and are kept there some thousands of years; they are then "clad with other hue, or sent into the change-

the educated—even educated Christians? Is it that, in fact, these do *not* now believe in the resurrection of the body? See also George Herbert (*Faith*, 20):—

> What though my body run to dust?
> Faith cleaves unto it, *counting every grain*
> *With an exact and most particular trust,*
> *Reserving all for flesh again.*

ful world again," to return as before when this fresh lifetime is over; " so, like a wheel, around they run from old to new." Their substance, the one substance of all alike, men, beasts, birds, fish, reptiles, is eternal, implying in itself its own eternal sustenance, and is never changed or altered, only the forms and outward fashions being variable and subject to decay and death. Yet in the very midst of this heathenism of the transmigration of souls (" whose changes ever run into themselves," and are not the circlings of an ever-ascending spiral such as the most ancient Hindoos and some of the most modern Europeans have conceived) and the immutable eternity of the one universal substance and the supremacy of eternal Fate, Spenser, as if to throw out into more striking relief the ethnic lineaments, speaks of

> —the mighty word
> Which first was spoken by th' Almighty Lord,
> That bad them to *increase and mutiply.*

The poet sage was, of course, quite as well aware as can be his most subtle critic of the startling incongruity, the abrupt contradiction; but he attempted no reconciliation, any more than Nature attempts to reconcile her serpents and tigers with her doves and lambs: wisdom is justified of her children; in the exuberance of intense and fecund life, every form is vindicated solely by its own vitality; like the baron of old, more legal than the pedantry of law, " By the sword I won, with the sword I'll keep."

It was the opinion of Macaulay (Essay on Bunyan) that very few readers of the *Faerie Queene* ever continue unexhausted, so as to be in at the death of the Blatant Beast; and this opinion was certainly not overbold, for there is no death of the Blatant Beast in the book. Any particular slander may be muzzled, but slander and false rumour in general cannot be done away from the earth, so long as men

and women, with two ears and one tongue each, continue to exist upon it. (Macaulay, however, may have used the phrase "in at the death" in the proverbial figurative sense of "persevere to the end:" but even thus he was wrong to use a phrase which must lead to misunderstanding when the subject is the chase of a beast.) But whether the mass of readers do or do not go fairly through to the end of the sixth Book, where the Beast is left free in the world again, barking and biting and raging sore, they surely read the two cantos and two stanzas which follow this Book, and are supposed to be a fragment of the Legend of Constancy. It is difficult to conceive readers weary and exhausted, when the author is so far from betraying any symptoms of exhaustion or weariness, that nobler and more vigorous writing cannot be selected from the noblest passages of the six complete Books.

> Proud Change (not pleased in mortall things
> Beneath the moone to raigne)
> Pretends, as well as of gods as men,
> To be the soveraine.

For she is the daughter

> Of her that is grandmother magnifide
> Of all the gods, great Earth, great Chaos' child:

And by the father's side she is greater in blood than all the gods, being descended from Titan the elder brother of Saturn. Jove * naturally will not cede her claim;

* We have lost much by our disuse of the name *Jove* for the sovereign of the world, ruler of heaven and earth. With our older writers this Jove was *le bon Dieu* of the French, *der liebe Gott* of the Germans; God with his solemn state thrown off, in a jolly after-dinner mood, ready for the give and take of free chat. Under cover of this title they dared discuss many things and express many thoughts which they could not have done with the use of the words God, and Lord, and Jehovah. And there is often a happy ambiguity as to whether their hits are given in jest or in earnest, whether they are indeed striking at the jovial or the serious Deity. A writer has

> For we by conquest of our soveraine might,
> *And by eternall doome of Fate's decree,*
> Have wonne the empire of the heavens bright.

But the Titaness will not accept Jove's judgment on his own case:

> But to the highest him that is behight
> Father of gods and men by equall might,
> To weet, the god of Nature, I appeale.

Jove was wroth and inly grudged, but could not refuse the appeal; and all, both heavenly powers and earthly wights, were summoned to appear before Nature on Arlo Hill. Spenser invents and tells the legend of Molanna and Faunus, and assembles all the gods on Arlo Hill, with the calm unhesitating assurance of an ancient Greek addressing a Greek audience of the Heroic Age, ready and eager to accept the utmost profusion of local mythology.

Canto seven gives us the arbitration. Note the description of Nature in stanzas 5, 6, and 7, and how the poet can find nothing with which to compare the brightness of Her vesture, but is dazed as were the three disciples who saw the Transfiguration of their glorious Lord on Mount Thabor; and how She is far greater and more tall of stature than any of the gods or powers on high. Note also in the first stanza the seriousness with which he speaks of Jove, "heaven's king (thy sovereign sire), his fortunate success," as if he were thinking rather of our God than of Jove, celebrating some triumph of Ormuzd over Ahriman.

Change then commences before the throne of Nature, her magnificent pleading; with its wonderful illustrations of the Seasons, the Months, Day and Night, Life and Death, sweeping past in ordered procession, full of bold and vigo-

not this convenient mask now, and must either cant demurely or "outrage pious sensibilities"—confound them!—sensibilities that do not shrink from damning the vast mass of us to all eternity.

rous life as a painting of Titian or Paul Veronese. She is unabashed by heaven and the gods, addressing herself with reverence to Nature only:

> For heaven and earth I both alike do deeme,
> Sith heaven and earth are both alike to thee;
> And Gods no more than men thou dost esteeme:
> For even the gods to thee, as men to Gods, do seeme.

And she disposes of men with disdainful brevity in six lines;

> Ne doe their bodies only flit and fly;
> But eeke their minds (*which they immortall call*)
> Still change and vary thoughts, as new occasions fall.

Mark how Christianity and Heathenism are mixed in the description of December, stanza 41, whose mind is so glad because of his Saviour's birth, and who rides upon a shaggy-bearded goat—the same, they say, which suckled Dan Jove. Ponder the four lines, stanza 46, about Death:

> Death with most grim and griesly visage seene,
> Yet is he naught but parting of the breath;
> Ne aught to see, but like a shade to weene,
> *Unbodièd, unsouled, unheard, unseen.*

And, above all, consider the summing up of Nature, stanza 58, in vindication of Her verdict against Change:

> I well consider all that ye have sayd;
> And find that all things stedfastnesse doe hate,
> And changèd be; yet being rightly wayd,
> They are not changèd from their first estate;
> But by their change their being doe dilate;
> And, turning to themselves at length againe,
> Doe worke their own perfection so by fate:
> Then over them Change doth not rule and raigne
> But they raigne over Change, and doe their states maintaine.

How would the fundamental Christian doctrines of Original Sin, of Election, of the Atonement, of Eternal

Punishment and Reward, fare in collision with this sublime philosophy?

Nature goes on to predict, and the prediction harmonises about equally well with every religion and philosophy not based on materialism which has ever ruled among mankind:

> But time shall come when all shall changèd bee,
> And from thenceforth none no more change shall see!

And immediately after, in the only stanzas that are left of canto viii., we have the impassioned Theistic prayer, the noble ending (though the consummate end should have been so far off) of the noble work:

> Then gin I think on that which Nature sayd,
> Of that same time when no more change shall bee,
> But stedfast rest of all things, firmly stayd
> Upon the pillours of Eternity,
> That is contrayr to Mutabilitie:
> For all that moveth doth in change delight:
> But thenceforth all shall rest eternally
> With him that is the God of Sabaoth hight:
> O! that great Sabaoth God, grant me that Sabbaths sight!

What a leap is this away from

> So was the Titanesse put downe and whist,
> And Jove confirmed in his imperiall see.

In selecting these examples I have confined myself to three favourite portions of the *Faerie Queene:* students of Spenser (and it is to be hoped that their number is legion) can judge whether similar examples do or do not abound in the other portions. My object in gathering them is by no means that of reflecting doubt upon the sincerity of the Christianity of Spenser. The great men of his age and of the two succeeding generations were profoundly religious, at any rate in their belief; they were Christians, but above all (and this is the fact upon which I would dwell) they

were Men. Saintliest purity and fervour of religious faith; boldest and most vigorous manhood in thought and action; intense heavenliness in the study, intense earthliness and worldliness out of the study; each phase developed with the most puissant freedom, without care for consistency and symmetry: these are concise formulæ of their complex-simple nature. Consistency and symmetry were there; the most antagonistic tendencies of any one nature are consistent in that nature, the wildest outgrowths from any one nature are symmetrical to a view of the whole: but these men did not cramp and trim themselves into a consistency leading-article-proof, into that symmetry which a tea-party praises as nice and good and respectable, as the most of us do now. They trimmed and polled their trees into absurd and fantastic uniformity, but let their own characters grow with the most lusty and savage and majestic freedom: we have given over mutilating plantations into artificial uniformity, and direct the absurdity to ourselves.

What an age was theirs! The Bible newly set free from its monastic prison-house, and the veil of the temple rent in twain from the top to the bottom by the earthquakes of the Reformation; the languages and literatures of Greece and Rome just become universal scholarship, physical science just beginning to awake from its long swoon, and a New World of marvels half discovered in the West. The thirst and the capacity of these men were equal to the most profuse outpourings from all these fountains. Moses and Isaiah, Jesus and Paul, Plato and Aristotle, Homer and Virgil, Plutarch and Livy, El Dorado and the Spanish Main; they would and could absorb and assimilate all; each new acquisition but made them more eager to acquire. They received all and believed all; devoured all and digested all; the richer the feast, and the longer it lasted, the further were they from satiety. They were not critical and fasti-

dious, because their stomachs were not queasy, because their free active life never let them suffer dyspepsia. If Siloa's brook and Jordan stream flowed sacred through their spirit; none the less did Hippocrene and Amazon pour with power through their imaginations: Sinai and the Mount of Olives could not shut out from their view Parnassus and Olympus: ulterior designs on the New Jerusalem did not hinder prompt search for El Dorado. Nearly every great man was great integrally, in character and talents and genius, in body and mind and soul, so that he was equal to all occasions and circumstances; a finished gentleman, a brilliant courtier, a wise statesman, an astute negotiator, a learned scholar, a weighty writer, a profound philosopher, a subtle theologian, an accomplished soldier, a dauntless sailor. Our most eminent persons appear poor thin fragments of great men compared with a Raleigh, a Sidney, a Herbert of Cherbury, a Vane, a Hampden, a Kenelm Digby, a Montrose, a Pym, an Eliot. As writers, these men pressed fearlessly all that they knew and loved into their works. Drayton put all England in the most minute detail into one vast poem, the *Polyolbion*. The dramatists put all our history and great part of ancient history, battles, genealogies, conspiracies, sects, schisms, factions, into plays. In like spirit Spenser crushes the whole Chronicle of Briton kings from Brute to Uther's reign into a canto; and all the rivers of England, together with the most famous of the rest of the world, into another, enumerating the fifty Nereids (nearly every name with a distinguishing epithet) in four stanzas. He did not first timidly inquire whether a thing was poetical: he knew it and cared for it, and therefore used it in his poem; and everything he used was poeticised. Fires so great and intense could make fuel of any and every material they met. We have decorous little fires in pretty grates, fed daintily with chips of perfumed wood; fires to be trusted as in-

nocuous in a drawing-room. Tennyson gleaming softly through his gilded wires wouldn't set a muslin robe aflame. We have armies of assiduous fuel gatherers; and only two or three fires with an undomestic Plutonic energy in them to make fervent heat and broad light of the fuel.

Spenser and his fellows, peers of the noblest men that have existed since the human race was born, in their lives and works explicitly or implicitly avow and maintain that whatever exists has the right in having the might to exist; that intense and fecund vitality is mysteriously identical with the purest morality and the profoundest truth, and that when and where they appear to clash, it is all the worse for the morality and the truth, not for the vitality. Whatever their religious faith, they, in thought and action, refused to be bound by its narrow limitations, and were for ever bursting through their own creeds and systems, as Samson through the ropes and the withes with which he had let himself be bound. A creed or system is a strait-waistcoat for Nature; and if you will persist in trying to force it upon Her, you will soon experience that the great Titaness not only flings it off with wrathful disdain, but makes yourself fit for a strait-waistcoat in recompense for your trouble. These men manufactured the strait-waistcoats with the laborious ingenuity man has ever displayed in that useful work, but they were far too naturally and instinctively wise to dement themselves by constant efforts to compel Nature to wear them when manufactured. And the great Mother laughed at their pretty doll-dresses, and took these her robust and passionate children to the embrace of her naked love. How she serves us now may be learnt in *Peter Bell the Third*, that long wild laugh of a young Greek god at the vision of a highly respectable English Sunday-school teacher, toiling up Parnassus with a heavy bundle of sermons and hymn-books and moral old clothes on his

back, resolved to convert and civilise those poor shameless heathen Muses: Peter, that is to say Wordsworth, being praised of all the wise people at present as the wisest and purest of poets, and incomparably the most intimate with Nature:—

But from the first 'twas Peter's drift
To be a sort of moral eunuch:
He touched the hem of Nature's shift—
Grew faint—and never dared uplift
The closest all-concealing tunic.

She smiled the while with an arch smile,
And kissed him with a sister's kiss;
And said, "My best Diogenes,
I love you well; but, if you please,
Tempt not again my deepest bliss.

"'Tis you are cold; for I not coy
Give love for love frank, warm, and true;
And Burns, a Scottish peasant-boy—
His errors prove it—knew my joy
More, learnèd friend, than you."

OPEN SECRET SOCIETIES.

1865.

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I.

INSCRIBED upon the banners of the grandest Secret Societies recorded in history, as at once their motto and their vindication, we read the great words, Love, Truth, Justice. *Love*, when the Society has professed to discipline its members in fraternity, expanding and attuning their hearts to its cosmic laws, and thus gradually preparing an Age of Gold for the iron-bound earth. *Truth*, when the Society has professed to cherish for secure development some priceless germ of doctrine, too weak and tender as yet to bear the rough storms of the open air. The truth may be purely scientific, without any direct relation to the existing polity; in which case it is fostered in secret because the vulgar mind cannot comprehend it, and its cultivators fear persecution as professors of the black art. Or it may be religious, having a direct relation to the existing polity; in which case its votaries are secretly undermining a superstition or spiritual tyranny as yet too strong to be openly attacked. *Justice*, when the end of the Society is political or social, in immediate relation to active life; in which

case its adherents are secretly undermining some temporal tyranny whose conquest it would as yet be hopeless to attempt by open assault. These appear to be the very best ends which Secret Societies have ever acknowledged or professed as justifying and demanding their institution. Of such as have sprung from meaner or lighter motives, and have intentionally worked for selfish or fantastic or obstructive purposes, it is not here necessary to speak.

Judging them *à priori*, by deduction from their own first principles without induction of historical facts and fancies, my opinion is that even the best of such Secret Societies, formed and carried on for these best objects, always must have been and always must be failures; that at the best the results cannot pay the expense of the elaborate machinery, that the business must be carried on at a heavy and continually-increasing ratio of loss. But I have had no experience in any such Society, and I am well aware that deductions from first principles are often in reality as foolishly wrong as they appear logically right; the reader will therefore please to bear in mind that my statements state mere inferences, and are liable to be dispersed to the four winds by statements of facts from some member of a noble brotherhood. It would be tiresome to begin nearly every sentence with "I should judge," or some similar phrase; let it, then, be understood once for all that the following are mere fancy portraits, and may be very vile caricatures of the originals.

A Secret Society must come into being with a glow of enthusiasm and a vigorous activity; but the enthusiasm becomes a narrow fanaticism or dies out altogether, the activity degenerates into busybodyism or sets into an unprogressive routine like that of a squirrel in its cage. The spirit of fraternity either discovers that it cannot harmonise the little world of the Society, and gradually

perishes of atrophy, or in its hunger grasps at husks and straw in the absence of grain; or it narrows into the exclusiveness of a clique or coterie, cherishing rather a pharisaical contempt than a yearning love for the mass of uninitiate mankind.

If the object of the Society be the hidden conservation and secret culture of some truth, it probably appears, in the course of a not long time, that instead of the truth expanding the intellects of its votaries to its breadth and greatness, they are contracting it to the measure of their own narrow littleness. The first warm intoxication is soon followed by a very cold sobriety, if not by shuddering nausea. And the truth adopted and professed by the Society will be even narrower than the intellect of almost any one of its members; for all will assent only to some proposition shorn of everything very offensive to one or the other; hence the result is a maimed, mutilated, semi-vital compromise; it will not soar with the birds, it will not walk with the beasts, so it flits about bat-like in the dusk lower air. For a meeting is always less wise than a man. The branches lopped off from their tree of knowledge will be precisely the most vigorous individual offshoots. Thus the sublime and fruitful doctrine withers into an abstract formula, the sacred watchwords become jargon and cant; the conservation which was enterprised in the spirit of progress is continued in the spirit of obstructiveness. In the meantime the outward air has become milder, the temperature of the human zone has ameliorated; and while this tree of knowledge has been cut and trimmed lest it should shatter the glass walls of its conservatory, and has languished in the lack of natural warmth and light, not all the similar germs left to the rough nursing of open nature have perished; some have thriven, deep-rooted and strong-boughed from their warfare with tempests, and contrast in their robust

integral majesty with this sickly mutilated dwarf. It remains then for the Society simply to enfranchise its members by abolishing itself, or (the course it will probably pursue for many years) to take refuge in pretence and deceit, asserting peculiar and mysterious virtues for its specimen, which is only uncommon by stunted deformity, and claiming for it heavenly powers in the absence of earthly fruits.

Secret Societies whose aim is direct action, as the overthrow of political tyranny, are likely to fail yet more conspicuously. The energy and skill which should be employed in pressing onward are mainly absorbed in the endless work of keeping the complex machine and its intricate gear in order. If the Society be swayed by a council, it will go to wreck by internal incoherences; and, at any rate, with the utmost possible harmony, a council of war never equals the inspired daring of a general. If it be wielded by one man, it may hold together and prove a most formidable engine; but will probably prove yet more formidable to the enemies than to the friends of the tyranny it was constructed to overthrow. Every member in the moment of suffering initiation abdicates his personal freedom, loses the very essence of his manhood, is no longer a living will, but the blind and dumb slave of some other unknown will, and must exist thenceforth under a despotism far more absolute than the worst which can grow up publicly to oppress mankind. And the secresy in which all the members are involved intensifies and raises to higher powers the evil of mutual distrust, which is the deepest foundation of all tyrannies in the world. Try to conceive the state of a member in social converse, when the subject of talk is the Government or the Society as rumour with its thousand tongues describes it. The man who speaks most loudly against the Government may be a brother member, may be

a spy of the Government; the man who speaks most loudly against the Society may be a member in the confidence of some of the chiefs, if not of *the* Chief, and may be a genuine supporter of the Government. The man who communicates some sign of fraternity and wishes to converse intimately on the Society, may be a real devoted member, may be one who without taking on the vows of initiation has discovered this sign, may be a Government spy who has been charged to get initiated in order to thoroughly betray, may be a double Judas who sells Government secrets to the Chief, and Society secrets to the Government. As a double Judas, he may be at bottom more the friend of the Chief than of the Government, or more the friend of the Government than of the Chief: he may have the connivance of the Chief in denouncing unimportant members and mysteries to the Government; he may have the connivance of the Government in revealing unimportant or quasi-important State secrets to the Society; and except the Chief himself no member can be sure that his own sacrifice may not be considered expedient in the interests of the Society. There are thus wheels within wheels whirling and intervolving to make the soundest head dizzy. Where all move in darkness you cannot discern whether your companions wear a single or a sevenfold veil. All the members must breathe that frenzying atmosphere of preternatural suspicion, which was the miasma of the Reign of Terror: I suspect, thou suspectest, he suspects; we, you, and they suspect, and are suspected; and we suspect that we are suspected, and are suspected that we suspect. Why should not the Chief himself be a super-subtle minion of the State? How can the Chief himself know whether large numbers of the affiliated are or are not subtle minions of the State? Why should not the Chief himself, even if sincere, have ends beyond ends in view which the mass of the Society have no knowledge of, and can but set their brains whirling by

guessing at? Why—as the Society is a state within the State—may there not be a society within the Society, ready to overthrow it in the moment it overthrows the State? And after all, should the Society succeed and become the ruling power, what a tenfold more terrible tryanny would this unknown phantom Chief exercise than any known Czar, Sultan, Emperor, King, Oligarchy, Timocracy, or Ochlocracy.

Thus it appears to me that the best Secret Societies (earnest and not sportive in their ends) must inherently be bad. They are based on the erroneous assumption that the thoughts and sentiments of mankind, that human nature, can be improved by machinery; that the Spirit of the Ages, the *Zeitgeist*, can be hurried forward by cunningly devised wheels and pistons. The wind that bloweth where it listeth will work windmills well-planted to catch its breath, the stream flowing ever unhasting, unresting, will work watermills well-placed to meet its current; but mill-sails cannot direct the wind, nor mill-wheels engender rivers.

In contrast to such Chinese ingenuities, so clever and so futile, there always have been and always will be in the world countless genuine Secret Societies of the most open, while of the most hidden, character. Continuous and unadulterate these have flowed, separate streams through the Sea of Time, from an antiquity which makes all nobilities and castes unreverend; holding in solution secrets and mysteries so august, so ineffable, that those of Illuminati and Rosicrucians, and even the Eleusinian and the Orphean and the Osirean, are jejune and puerile compared with them.

Their members are affiliated for life and death in the instant of being born; without ceremonies of initiation, without sponsorial oaths of fidelity. Their bond of union is a natural affinity, quite mysterious in its principles and

elements, precise and assured in its results as the combination and proportions of oxygen and hydrogen in water, or oxygen and nitrogen in air. No spy or traitor, no unworthy or uncongenial brother, can obtain entrance among them, any more than a hemlock or a lily can be adopted into the family of the roses, any more than an ape or a tiger can pass as one of a herd of elephants. Their esoteric doctrines are the most spontaneous and independent thoughts of each and every of their members; their secret watchwords are the most free and public expressions of their members; their mysterious signals are telegraphed in the most careless gestures which all eyes may see. The watchwords and symbols change from generation to generation, the supreme secrets are immutable from the beginning to the end of Time. Exactly what they cherish and adore as the inmost mystery of their being, their whole being ever strives to utter most clearly abroad to the senses and hearts and intellects of the whole world; thus the mystery still inviolate must for ever be inviolable, for there can be no new or better means of expression and interpretation: only the initiated ever truly hear and read it, to all others it is sound without meaning and letters without significance. They are without machinery to regulate and propagate themselves; yet the rank of each brother is fixed with more than heraldic precision, and no one who should be of the confraternity ever fails to be gathered into it; and it endures aggregating throughout the centuries and the millenniums, while creeds and systems collecting millions of money and scattering thousands of missionaries languish and die away. They have not consciously signs of fraternity; yet a brother shall recognise a brother immediately by a glance, a gesture, a casual word, and the two shall be straightway as if they had been intimate from childhood. They have no set councils or lodges; yet the

experience of the senators is their shield, and the daring of the young members their sword; and they are thus, though dispersed throughout all the countries and cycles, ever ready in battle-array to repel or to assault. They are of all characters and professions; and each human being, while belonging supremely to one, belongs in lower degrees to many of them, for every point in the circle of his nature touches a point in the circle of some other nature.

In the noblest of these confraternities, very rarely in the lifetime of any one member does he come into personal contact with another of the same rank, almost never into personal contact with more than two or three others of the same rank; yet their spirit of fraternity is perfect, and with the dead of his brotherhood each may hold frequent and solemn communion. These rare meetings of the living seldom occur in the bustling streets and busy marts; but in places and times of extreme seclusion and tranquillity, or extreme agitation and strife. In the stillness of the library, the oratory, the studio; in the tumult and terror of the battle, the plague, the revolution, the shipwreck; brothers meet unforebodingly by twos and threes. The still meetings are their eucharistic love-feasts, the others are their Thermopylæ banquets: and the rapture of the agony in these transcends the rapture of the joy in those. In the moment of their coming together the whole past life of the one is revealed to the other; infinite mutual love and reverence consecrate their meeting and their parting. From drinking together the glorious wine of communion, they go their ways to live yet more nobly or to die more grandly, rejoicing in the death as in the life.

But it must be admitted that these loftiest of the Open Secret Societies, which exist everywhere and endure with the æon of our race, are parodied and counterfeited and traduced by ingenious Societies of the artificial kind, and

that many simple people confuse the parody with the original, the artificial with the natural. I shall have to speak of the respective parodies in speaking of a few of the originals; for one must come to the concrete in order to be plain and intelligible. In the concrete, however, I care only to describe somewhat in detail a few of the best and most generally distinguished. It is bad work dwelling on the bad; and it would be endless work trying to mention all the orders, genera, species, sub-species, and so on, through an infinitude of divisions and subdivisions.

II.

There is the Open Secret Society of the Heroes. Their mystery has been published in books, in songs, in world-famous deeds of life and death, to all men of all nations and languages; yet only the heroic brotherhood really comprehend it, and are fully possessed by its inspiration. Other men may have transient glimpses of its meaning, and may thrill with its divine enthusiasm in rare moments; but soon the great door shuts, and they are cowering again in the darkness and the cold; nor can they even truly remember these rare moments in other hours and days, though they remember well enough the words of the chant or the details of the action with which the inspiration happened to be connected. But one of the brotherhood understands and feels always. The mystery which he understands so thoroughly and feels so triumphantly is simply this: That in the whole range of the universe, from highest heaven to deepest hell, there is no thing or circumstance, creature or being, dreadful to a man; that out of himself there is nothing which a man need fear; that no nature can be born into a realm unconquerable by that nature; and, moreover, that the

most dazzling lightning of ecstasy leaps from the blackest storm of danger. But neither he who writes nor he who reads is any nearer to the heart of the mystery through this interpretation: if he is of the brotherhood his pulse beat in unison with the throbs of this heart before; if he is not of the brotherhood his pulse will never beat in unison with these throbs, save at intervals and for moments similar to those in which the hands of a clock that does not go accurately may agree with the hands of another which is keeping true time.

The ingenious parodies of this natural Society of the Heroes are the armies of the nations, those elaborate artificial organisations or aggregations whose spirit and tradition are popularly supposed to be heroism. Yet any one who is acquainted with an army or with portions of an army has learned that genuine heroes are nearly as rare in the military as in any other trade. The battle blood-drunkenness and *Schwärmerei* of congregated thousands by no means imply true heroism. I have known pretty well some of the men who rode and rode well in the Balaclava Light Cavalry Charge; some brave fellows, and some good fellows not specially brave; but I do not remember a hero amongst them.* How many soldiers cringe to their officers, how

* One of the most miserable humbugs of these years is the humbug of certain popular writers (the two Kingsleys, Tennyson, *Tom Brown*, *Guy Livingstone*, together with a solemn swarm of female novelists) anent the Crimean War. It has been a perfect godsend of profitable and blasphemous cant to them. That war was by no means heroic—a mere selfish haggle for the adjustment of the balance of power, badly begun and meanly finished; and five soldiers out of six who took part in it will tell you that they would much rather have pitched into the Turks than the Russians. Yet these pious scribes (for most of them are extra-earnest Christians, notable brawlers for the Gospel of Peace) invoke God and the seven heavens to attest its heroic sanctity.

Again, was English manhood really in so rotten a state ten years ago that these people are justified in soaring into ecstasies of admiration because an English army with its officers did not act like a drove of cowards (though in many instances exceedingly like a set of fools) during a rather severe and

many sneak and spy to get promotion, how many would swear falsely to any extent to escape a punishment, how few in the smallest matter dare act against the ordinary opinion of their comrades. And perhaps as a rule the officers are even less heroic than the men. A few of the brotherhood are in the army, a number not so small in the navy; the others are scattered through all trades and professions, are of all ages and of both sexes; you shall find them not in camps nor in men-of-war, but in garrets, and lighthouses, in huts and cottages, in hospitals and schools, in wild forests and sober manses. And they abound rather among the poor and ignorant who wrestle naked with the fierce myrmidons of destiny, than among the rich and learned who fight within golden armour and shoot scientific missiles from afar.

There is the Open Secret Society of the Saints. In how many books, in how many lovely lives, have their mysteries

longish siege? These bookwrights are as ready to bestow plenary absolution on every soldier who fairly did his duty there, as was Pope Urban on the first crusaders. "What shall I do to be saved?" asks the scamp or debauchee or desperado of a novel; "Go to the Crimea and thou shalt be saved," exclaims the enraptured novelist.

[Since the above was written, the general acclamation and worship of that vilest Blatant Beast, Jingoism, the most dastardly as it is the most vauntful and rapacious and bloodthirsty of big Bullies, have revealed an immeasurably deeper degradation of our English manhood than could have been foreboded sixteen years ago. The Court, the Senate, Pall-Malldom, the majority of the nobles and clergy and middle classes, have vied with the slums, the music halls, the hirelings of the Press, and the cosmopolitan gamblers of the Exchange, in despicable glorification of this hideous Idol, whose front is of brass and the rest of it clay tempered with blood. We have crouched at the feet of the sons of Levi for discipline in English honour and patriotism; our Queen has hailed our fitting Tyrtæus in a bard of vulgar comic songs. Soldiers successful—or even unsuccessful!—in brutally iniquitous battue-wars against tribes of ill-armed savages, have been bepraised and honoured and dowered as if they were the heroes of another Waterloo. All signs point to a thoroughly disastrous and disgraceful collapse of our whole military system should we find ourselves involved in a European war.—*March*, 1881.]

been published! yet how dark and unintelligible is their simplest vernacular to the learned as to the ignorant, to the learned even more than to the ignorant, who are not of the Society! These are they who know, and live up to the knowledge, that love is the one supreme duty and good, that love is wisdom and purity and valour and peace, and that its infinite sorrow is infinitely better than the world's richest joy.

The solemn artificial burlesques of this Open Secret Society are the Churches, the caricatures of its mysteries are the theologies, the parodies of its sacred watchwords and symbols are the creeds and the rituals and the ceremonies. These Churches have been elaborated and organised by man as patent reservoirs and cisterns (with a parson-tap for nearly every street) of the Waters of Life; and, behold, these waters scarcely flow into them at all, but turn away and make for themselves truly secret and mysterious channels; and stream in pure perennial rills through the souls of humble men and women whom the great chartered companies (strictly limited) for the exploitation of religion despise and perhaps detest; through the souls of poor servants and bondsmen who can barely read or read not at all, of barbarians and idolaters who never heard of the Atonement or the Trinity, of heresiarchs and infidels who never enter kirk or chapel or mosque or cathedral or temple, and whom all the sects furiously revile and persecute and condemn to the abomination of desolation.

Do not be surprised or disappointed if you find very few of this holy sisterhood and brotherhood in the hierarchy of canonised saints, of pontiffs and patriarchs, cardinals, archbishops, bishops, brahmans, imans, lamas; very few of them in the great universities and colleges among the learned divines and subtle theologians, very few of them in monasteries and nunneries, very few of them among the

priests and the presbyters, scarcely any of them in the most devout circles of the "religious world." Sometimes when one, being full of scorn and indignation, seeks relief in riant mockery of this Established State Church of ours, this clever church which manages so well to serve at once both God and Mammon, this spiritual church whose real Trinity is an abstract God the Creator, and a fictitious Christ the Redeemer, and a very substantial Holy Ghost of Bumbleism the Conservator; sometimes then a keen pang pierces one's breast, and the gloom of past time is filled with reproachful eyes as the gloom of night with pale stars. Full of sad reproach, and of love whose sweetness is the worst gall and wormwood of reproach, they gaze down upon him, these eyes of holy bliss and sorrow, these faces worn with suffering and fasting and self-renunciation, yet shining with ineffable beatitude; the eyes and the lineaments of true brothers and sisters of this Sacred Order, who being Christians were yet also indeed Saints. And in every pale regard one reads the sad question: Did I, O my friend, live and die thus and thus that you should laugh and fleer? And at first one is smitten with shame and remorse, but when he has reflected a little he replies humbly: Beloved and pure and beautiful souls, these whom I was mocking are not of you, though indeed they assume your name; they are of the fraternities of those who in your lifetimes mocked and hated and persecuted and killed you; they have caught up your solemn passwords because these are now passwords to wealth and worldly honour, which for you were passwords to the prison and the scaffold and the stake; they have clothed themselves with your sheep's clothing because wolves have long been extinct in our England, and sheep browse securely in the fattest pastures by the sweetest rivers; but they hate with a bitter hatred and fear all who are possessed by the spirit which possessed you; they are behind their age as you

were in the forefront of yours; they desecrate your holy mysteries, they stereotype your rapturous prayers into jargon and cant; for your eucharistic wine they have publican's gin-and-water, and your eucharistic bread they butter on both sides and flavour with slander at tea. Even I, poor heathen and cynic, am nearer to you, ye holy ones, than are ninety-nine in a hundred of these.

There is the Open Secret Society of the Philosophers. Many of them have endeavoured to utter their mystery, and their writings are in all languages; but none save the initiated can read them. These are they who know that the world is but a poor expression of thought, that action is but a rude hieroglyph of soul; that silent and pure and eternal, above the fleeting noisy world with its agitation of action and passion, rests the sphere of intellect, the realm of ideas. These are they of whom Emerson has written worthily: "But I cannot recite, even thus rudely, laws of the intellect, without remembering that lofty and sequestered class of men who have been its prophets and oracles, the high-priesthood of the pure reason, the *Trismegisti*, the expounders of the principles of thought from age to age. When, at long intervals, we turn over their abstruse pages, wonderful seems the calm and grand air of these few, these great spiritual lords, who have walked in the world—these of the old religion—dwelling in a worship which makes the sanctities of Christianity look *parvenues* and popular; for 'persuasion is in soul, but necessity is in intellect.' This band of grandees, Hermes, Heraclitus, Empedocles, Plato, Plotinus, Olympiodorus, Proclus, Synesius, and the rest, have somewhat so vast in their logic, so primary in their thinking, that it seems antecedent to all the ordinary distinctions of rhetoric and literature, and to be at once poetry and music and dancing and astronomy and mathematics. I am present at the sowing of the seed of the world. With

a geometry of sunbeams the soul lays the foundations of nature. The truth and grandeur of their thought is proved by its scope and applicability, for it commands the entire schedule and inventory of things for its illustrations. But what marks its elevation, and has even a comic look to us, is the innocent serenity with which these babe-like Jupiters sit in their clouds, and from age to age prattle to each other and to no contemporary. Well assured that their speech is intelligible, and the most natural thing in the world, they add thesis to thesis, without a moment's heed of the universal astonishment of the human race below, who do not comprehend their plainest argument; nor do they ever relent so much as to insert a popular or explaining sentence; nor testify the least displeasure or petulance at the dulness of their amazed auditory."

Very ponderous burlesques of this Open Secret Society are exhibited in the universities and colleges and schools. Professors build up complicated systems with the lumber they have gathered into their uninhabited upper storeys, and these systems pass for philosophy. Other erudite professors are salaried to expound Plato and the rest; brilliant and acute scholars win reputation by writing brilliantly about ideas, archetypes, dialectics, realism, nominalism, and so forth; but where among the professors and the scholars are the Platonists? Some quiet modest man, who has never read a work on metaphysics and knows nothing of the systems, shall meet with a golden sentence of Plato or Spinoza, Bacon or Berkeley, Fichte or Schelling, and at once feel: This is what I have known so long, yet could never thus express. But he has expressed it in his life, which is utterance far superior to the most eloquent rhetoric.

III.

There is the Open Secret Society of the Poets. These are they who feel that the universe is one mighty harmony of beauty and joy; and who are continually listening to the rhythms and cadences of this eternal music whose orchestra comprises all things from the shells to the stars, all beings from the worm to man, all sounds from the voice of the little bird to the voice of the great ocean; and who are able partially to reproduce these rhythms and cadences in the language of men. In all these imitative songs of theirs is a latent undertone, in which the whole infinite harmony of the whole lies furled; and the fine ears catch this undertone and convey it to the soul, wherein the furled music unfurls to its primordial infinity, expanding with rapturous pulses and agitating with awful thunders this soul which has been skull-bound, so that it is dissolved and borne away beyond consciousness, and becomes as a living wave in a shoreless ocean. If, however, these their poems be read silently in books, instead of being heard chanted by the human voice, then for the eye which has vision an underlight stirs and quickens among the letters, which grow translucent and throb with life; and this mysterious splendour entering by the eyes into the soul fills it with spheric illumination, and like the mysterious music swells to infinity, consuming with quick fire all the bonds and dungeon-walls of the soul, dazing it out of consciousness and dissolving it in a shoreless ocean of light. I have called these entrancements of beauty and joy, but there is intense sadness in the joy and a supernatural awe in the beauty: "Who is she that looketh forth as the morning, fair as the moon, clear as the sun, *and terrible as an army with banners?*" sings the magnificent poet of the Canticles; and Plato writes in the

Phædrus, "He who has been recently initiated, when he sees a godlike countenance, or some bodily form that presents a good imitation of beauty, *at first shudders, and some of the old terrors come over him.*"

The educated, the intelligent, the clever, by thousands, hear these songs sung, and read them in books, and think that they perfectly enjoy and comprehend; and they can discourse very profoundly about metres and diction and canons of art; but they never hear the undertone, and never have vision of the interior illumination, and are never rapt away in the ecstasy: thus the very soul of the poetry must, in truth, ever remain for them a music unheard, a light unseen, a language unknown embodied in their familiar mother-tongue.

Serious parodies of these divine songs abound in every age, and are welcomed by the uninitiate (who are usually what we call persons of liberal culture, for the poor and the ignorant remain grandly indifferent to all such attempts) as the most beautiful utterance of the inmost mysteries of this veritable Secret Society; and the authors thereof win during their lifetime wealth and honour and renown. For many of them can copy with marvellous adroitness the rhythms and rhymes and melodious phrases which are much loved by the true brotherhood, so that not only by others but also by themselves they are believed to be genuine bards. But when one who is initiate hears or reads their productions, he discerns that they are as fair bodies without souls; for the music and the splendour of infinity are not within them, and they are utterly unrelated to eternity.

Many, however, who are not learned and who are quite without profitable talents, shepherd youths and farm maidens, men in great cities who will never get on in the world, rude mountaineers familiar with sounding storms,

sailors with the rhythm of the ocean-tides in their blood, can hear this undertone of the cosmic harmony, and see this light transfiguring the world, and enter with these true Poets into the mysterious trance; and are thus, even though they know it not, real members of this high confraternity. For the best interpretation of its mysteries in our language, let me refer the reader to Shelley's *Defence of Poetry*.

Lastly (for this brief essay), there is the Open Secret Society of the Mystics. These are the very flower and crown of the four already touched upon, Saints of Saints, Heroes of Heroes, Philosophers of Philosophers, Poets of Poets; the identity of the masculine ideal of Hero and Philosopher and the feminine ideal of Poet and Saint. Their mysteries have been published to all the world in the choicest visions and actions, thoughts and strophes, of the choicest members of these other fraternities; yet not only do they remain utterly obscure and illegible to the common world of men, they are dark to all of even those fraternities who have not been initiated to the supreme degree.

This Society has been less parodied than any of the others; firstly, because (as I have heard) its mysteries are so awful that whoever long strives to parody them becomes insane; secondly, because its most common and public passwords and signs are incredibly difficult for the vulgar to distinguish. Its members may be unfolding the profoundest secrets in talking of dogs and cats, pans and kettles; they may be transmitting the most pregnant signals in doing the most ordinary daily work. As George Herbert has written (*The Elixir*):—

> A man that looks on glass,
> On it may stay his eye;
> Or if he pleaseth, through it pass,
> And then the heaven espy.
>
> . . . .

A servant with this clause
Makes drudgery divine:
Who sweeps a room as for Thy laws,
Makes that and the action fine.

But it is probable that we must go to the East for the purest fountain and the most copious river of the element which bathes the souls of this brotherhood. In Sir William Jones's *Dissertation on the Mystical Poetry of the Persians and Hindus*,* he translates an ode by a sufi of Bokhara, who assumed the poetical name of Ismat, which is so transcendent an expression of the spirit of this fraternity, that I must cite it in its completeness.

"Yesterday, half-inebriated, I passed by the quarter

* *Asiatic Researches*, vol. iii. In the same dissertation, Sir William Jones gives examples of the occult meanings which many zealous admirers insist upon attributing to the most common words in these mystical poems. Thus *wine* means devotion; *idolaters*, *infidels*, and *libertines* are men of the purest religion; a *tavern* is a retired oratory; *kisses* and *embraces* are the raptures of piety, &c. &c. I do not doubt that orthodox Mussulmans are satisfied with such interpretations; nor would I argue that such interpretations are not in any sense right, for occult or spiritual meanings certainly abound in these poems. But had the poets meant the *same kind* of religion, devotion, &c., as the orthodox, they would have used the orthodox terms. No serious writer, and especially no poet, casts away venerable words rich in solemn and tender associations, until he finds that they are altogether inadequate to convey his thought. Had the religion of Ismat been nothing more or higher than the best religion of those around him, would he have spoken with such contempt of the glass of piety, the square temple, the mosque, the cloak of a dervise? would he have celebrated with enthusiasm wine and paganism, the two things most abhorred by the devout among his people? The fact is, that mysticism, being intimate with the soul of the world in its own right, knows that it is beyond the law, proves its prerogative by dignifying the most despised objects (as a Sultan who makes a slave his Vizier), and cannot help now and then riotously shocking the formalists. For mysticism is the identity of the purest faith and the purest scepticism; the extremes not only meet, they intermingle and grow veritably one. There are in Christianity germs of this spirit which few Christians have ever dared to cultivate, and which few of those who have dared have been fit to cultivate: see the *Epistle to the Romans, passim*. The Anabaptists, Antinomians, &c. &c., made a miserable mess of it.

where the vintners dwell, to seek the daughter of an infidel who sells wine.

"At the end of the street there advanced before me a damsel, with a fairy's cheeks, who, in the manner of a pagan, wore her tresses dishevelled over her shoulders like the sacerdotal thread. I said: 'O thou, to the arch of whose eyebrow the new moon is a slave, what quarter is this, and where is thy mansion?'

"She answered: 'Cast thy rosary on the ground; bind on thy shoulder the thread of paganism; throw stones at the glass of piety; and quaff wine from a full goblet:

"'After that come before me, that I may whisper a word in thine ear; thou wilt accomplish thy journey, if thou listen to my discourse.'

"Abandoning my heart, and rapt in ecstasy, I ran after her, till I came to a place, in which religion and reason forsook me.

"At a distance I beheld a company, all insane and inebriated, who came boiling and roaring with ardour from the wine of love.

"Without cymbals, or lutes, or viols, yet all full of mirth and melody; without wine, or goblet, or flask, yet all incessantly drinking.

"When the cord of restraint slipped from my hand, I desired to ask her one question, but she said: 'Silence!

"'This is no square temple, to the gate of which thou canst arrive precipitately; this is no mosque to which thou canst come with tumult, but without knowledge. This is the banquet-house of infidels, and within it all are intoxicated; all from the dawn of eternity to the day of resurrection, lost in astonishment.

"'Depart then from the cloister, and take the way to the tavern; cast off the cloak of a dervise and wear the robe of a libertine.'

"I obeyed; and, if thou desirest the same strain and colour with Ismat, imitate him, and sell this world and the next for one drop of pure wine."

Similar passages, I believe, abound in Hafiz:—

"Stain with wine thy prayer-carpet if the old man of the tavern commands thee: for the traveller is not ignorant of the ways and customs of the inn."

> "Build up thy heart with wine; for this ruined world
> Is resolved when we are dead to make only bricks of our clay."

And Sir William Jones cites a fine sentence from the *Bustan;* wherein, characteristically, thorough sameness of the spirit is couched in contradiction of the letter: "Through remembrance of God they shun all mankind; they are so enamoured of the cup-bearer, that they spill the wine from the cup."

In our own poetry sublime expression of some of their subtlest mysteries may be read by who can read in the *Epipsychidion* of Shelley.

But there are those informed by this spirit who cannot read its letter. For it is to be remarked that every talent and ability, and all scientific and other "useful" knowledge, are apt to be hindrances and veils to the purest manifestations of this mystery in humanity. "He has hidden these things from the wise and prudent, and revealed them unto babes."—"Suffer little children to come unto me, for of such is the kingdom of heaven."—"To the Jews a stumbling-block, and to the Greeks foolishness." A man of great talents and acquirements may have also this celestial genius; but such a one, be sure, employs his talents and acquirements simply as hewers of wood and drawers of water in the menial household service thereof. Every one who elevates them to be his ambassadors and ministers in

the high and solemn businesses of life does so in destitution of this genius plenipotential.

The loftiest member of this Open Secret Society familiar to us, familiar to us if we can read the story of his actions and his words aright, was a poor carpenter's son who seems to have had no other learning than such knowledge of the sacred books of his people as any frequenter of the synagogues of his people might easily have acquired, who we are told could read (Luke iv. 16, 20), but who perhaps could not write. When the theological scaffolding which has been reared around the image of this man shall have altogether fallen away, and the lineaments can be seen in broad daylight, we shall discover that he reigns over us by the power and prerogative of his divine mysticism.

Such are a few of the loftiest Open Secret Societies, these organisations of Nature so perfect and enduring, so superior to the most subtle organisations elaborated by man. And in all of them, I think, we find that the poor and the mean and the ignorant and the simple have their part no less—nay, have their part even more—than the rich and the great and the learned and the clever. Let us praise the impartiality of our Mother Nature, the most venerable, the ever young, the fountain of true democracy, the generous annunciator of true liberty and equality and fraternity; who bestoweth on all her children alike all things most necessary to true health and wealth, the sunshine, the air, the water, the fruits of the earth; and opens to rich and poor alike the golden doors of enfranchisement and initiation into the mysteries of heroism, purity, wisdom, beauty, and infinite love.

Were I required to draw a practical moral, I should say that all proselytism is useless and absurd. Every human being belongs naturally, organically, unalterably, to a certain species or society; and by no amount of repeating

strange formulas, ejaculations, or syllogisms, can he really apostatise from himself so as to become a genuine member of a society to which these are not strange but natural. A penny whistle doesn't become a cathedral organ by being made to whistle the *Old Hundredth;* a church mouse doesn't grow a lion by straying into a Secular Hall.

SAYINGS OF SIGVAT.

1865.

—o—

THESE sayings I heard from the mouth of Sigvat Bragason, who thought after this manner, and thus was he wont to express himself when he took the trouble to speak.

He once said: If the religious had strong faith, I might respect them for their religion; if the infidels had strong disbelief, I might respect them for their infidelity. But the religious do not believe in God the Father, for they never keep his commandments; they do not believe in the Holy Ghost, for they fear and detest all living inspiration, and worship the lifeless letters of a book; they do not believe in Christ the Lord, else would they love one another; they do not believe in Heaven and eternal life, for they cling desperately to this earth and life; they do not believe in Hell, for if they really did they would all go mad. On the other hand, infidels superabound with belief: they believe that empiricism can discover all the world's veiled mysteries, that logic can resolve all the world's problems; they believe that human nature can be improved out of man, and that every one can lift himself some fine day higher than heaven, sitting in his own basket; they believe that many an existence depends absolutely upon

man's belief in its existence; and they all, above all, believe in themselves—which is the very anti-climax of credulity.

He also said: I do not see that mankind in general can ever manage to exist without a religion of some kind; and I do not see that it matters much what kind of religion they have. For dogmas are but empty bottles and barrels into which each believer pours as much spirit as he has, and of such kind and quality as he has; so that you shall find two bottles of exactly the same pattern, the one full of vitriol-gin and the other full of purest nectar. Very few men have enough spirit to overfill or even to half-fill the holy vessels; and these very few men usually keep on pouring contentedly, though their bottles have been long overflowing.

He also said: The discipline and rites of a religion are far more important and influential than the dogmas.

It was he who asked: Can you convert another man to your own height, figure, complexion, constitution, temperament?—if you can, you may also convert him really and truly to your own faith. No one sentence ever means exactly the same from any two mouths or in any two pairs of ears; nor even from any one mouth or in any one pair of ears at different times. And when it was inquired of him: Wherefore, since you are persuaded of the vanity of all attempts at proselytising, do you now and then write and talk as if to teach and persuade? he answered: First and foremost, because "it is my nature to." But also, though no word of mine will ever convert any one from being himself into being another Me, my word may bring cheer and comfort and self-knowledge to others who are more or less like myself, and who may have thought themselves peculiar and outcast; it may be to them a friendly voice revealing that they have a brother in the world, and may thus hearten them to put trust in themselves and keep

true to themselves, nor succumb to the amiable cowardice of seeking to pretend to believe otherwise than they really do believe, for the sake of fellowship and communion. For the real brothers on this earth are seldom gathered around one family hearth, but are in general widely scattered throughout the kingdoms and nations, and yet more widely scattered throughout the centuries.

He went on: That man was but too correct who exclaimed, "In this wide world of ours there is no creature who has either the will or the power to help another." And it being objected to him: Why then do you, having no faith in the improvability of man by man, sometimes work hard as if to help and improve your fellows? he answered equally: First and foremost, because "it is my nature to." And he added: One works, one cannot but work, as his being ordains, exercising the faculties and attempting to gratify the desires thereof, whether he thinks that such exercise will produce what other people call good or ill, that such gratification implies what other people call happiness or misery. If one is a musket, he will shoot, and is right to shoot; if one is a dirk, he will stab, and is right to stab. When the antelope complained against the tiger's ferocity, the tiger answered: Why have I claws but to seize and rend? why have I teeth but to bite? why have I hunger but to eat? why do you suit me and why do I meet you but that I should eat you? You are right to complain, my poor swift-footed dinner, for the case is very hard for you; I am equally right to devour, else the case would be very hard for me.—So much for Bentham and Mill, for the greatest happiness theory, for universal philanthropy and sublime utilitarianism, added Sigvat cheerfully.

I remember that it was once asked of him: If you saw one drowning whom you knew to be a rogue, a fool, a pest, would you risk your own life in the attempt to save him?

And he answered: If not, the refraining would be through lack of nerve or courage, never through any thought that my life was more valuable than his. My life could be by no means valuable if it would not attempt this very thing, if it had not the courage to risk itself whenever destiny offered a fair stake against it. The issues of all action are quite beyond human calculation; the instincts prompting to action each one can judge for himself. The doctor who has prolonged the lives of many patients would be very hard bestead to prove that it would not have been quite as well, or even better, for the world in general and the patients themselves had their lives not been prolonged. No worker of what are called good works can be sure that in the long run he does more good than harm. He fulfils his own nature, as it is right for him he should.

He also said: The sage hath it somewhat thus, "The people are many millions, and the most of them are fools." But were the most foolish as wise as the most wise are now, and were the wisest proportionately wiser, the saying would be none the less stinging. Some men stand but five feet, others stand six and even seven feet, and the difference is large in ratio to the average height of the race: but what is the height of seven feet to the diameter of the earth, to the distance of the moon, of the sun, of the nearest star? Supposing we stood from fifty to seventy feet, would any of us be absolutely great? Therefore, he added, let my son be a commonplace wight, and not a genius or a sage; for the little wisdom he will thus have less is so incalculably small in comparison with any really great standard, that the lack thereof will be compensated a thousandfold by the social comfort of always living among creatures whose thoughts and feelings are very similar to his own.

He once remarked: Certain so-called Spiritualists and Materialists, usually accounted most opposite in their

opinions, appear to me like persons working out the same algebraic puzzle in the same manner, but using different symbols for the unknown quantity. The process of the one bristles with X's (say *spirit*), that of the other bristles with Y's (say *matter*); yet their solutions in the end are identical.

It was a saying of his: Absolute life is indefinitely superior to the highest art; yet life as we see it in the men living actively around us is so poor and mean, that he who takes refuge in art must be impuissant indeed if he cannot amply vindicate his choice.

Once when it was told him that a certain sage had written to the effect that "perchance man, when he hath tamed all the other inferior animals, may begin to tame and civilise woman," Sigvat said: This I am happy to believe quite impossible. Women are tamest where the men are most savage, and show wilder and wilder as the men grow less rude: the squaw is the slave of Indian and Kaffir; John Bull, rich, respectable and educated, is the very humble and obedient servant of his wife. As for the civilisation of women, I ardently love and admire the sex, but I am bound to say that I never yet knew a woman with even the most elementary idea of truth and justice. They are all born deceivers; the only difference being that the good ones are always deceiving us for what they think our good, while the bad ones are always deceiving us for what they think their own good. The best woman would overthrow the equilibrium of the universe for the sake of her lover, her child, or her husband. And as for the taming of civilisation in general, I want to know how long we could exist on the earth were we all thoroughly tame and good. Very well-meaning and stupid people nowo'days are doing their best (a poor little ludicrous best it is) to get us civilised off the face of the earth; they don't see that we need some very tough and rough savagery to keep a firm hold

upon it. Nature is savage enough, and is likely to continue so; I don't think that she has made her arrangements specially for our placid and inane comfort, nor do I find that the saints and the goody philosophers are her darlings. We must have teeth, and strong and sharp ones, to crack the hard nuts she throws to us. To think that there are grown men always talking treacle and pap! men who have seen and heard a thunderstorm, and are not ignorant of the existence of shark and crocodile and tiger!

Very often to the optimist philosophers or sophs who pestered him, he would give no other answer than that sentence of the great sage which he hugely relished: "Man is not what one calls a happy animal; his appetite for sweet victual is so enormous."

To some of the sect of the Christians he once remarked: In the old Jewish book of your idolatry I find one very good text, though read as I read it in English, it means not quite the same it meant in the original. Perchance because it is so excellent, I do not remember to have heard or seen a sermon upon it. "*Woe unto them that draw iniquity with cords of vanity, and sin as it were with a cart-rope.*" The iniquity which a man draws and tugs painfully to him, that is the abomination; not the iniquity which itself draws him. The so-called sin which glows with hot fire of passion, one does not detest even when it is such sin as one's self is not inclined to. But they who violate their own nature, who force themselves to sin for which they have no liking but which happens to be fashionable, who sacrifice themselves to show and tickling vanity, these are the poor dupes and fools one finds it hard to keep temper with. Yet what an immense portion of the world's iniquity is drawn with cords of vanity! what a great share of the world's sin is dragged onerously as it were with a cart-rope! How many men take more trouble against their own inclinations to be

reputed fashionable sinners, than the stiffest of respectable people take to be reputed religious! Pagan as I am, said Sigvat, I think I could preach you a rousing sermon on this text of the prophet.

Being once questioned with a certain whining solemnity as to his immortal soul, he laughed long in uncontrollable laughter:—A very sublime being truly is this Sigvat, to expect and claim immortality! But I fear that the universe can do without me, as *me*, though my being is part of its being. When I die, Nature seizes on my effects, administers my estate, duly distributing the property. I who am dead as this Sigvat still continue my interest in the general life by every particle of my being thus distributed, and by the enduring existence of all that I have ever rayed forth—from attraction of gravity, attraction and repulsion electrical, to thought and emotion of humanity. Nothing is lost, though the walls of the *Ego* have given way and let in the floods of the universe. It is quite right to call death dissolution; it may be also solution, resolution, evolution. Immortality! why the most of us don't know what to do with this one little personal life, and might well wonder how we came to be promoted to the dignity thereof: the claim to immortality is the claim to be trusted with millions of pounds because one has shown himself unfit to be trusted with sixpence. Leave me, O comical little men, with your talk about eternity; go and try to live a single happy and rational day!

A WORD FOR XANTIPPE.

1866.

—o—

" To make a happy fireside clime
For weans and wife,
Is the true pathos and sublime
Of human life."—BURNS.

FOR a couple of thousand years or so poor Xantippe has been infamous among men as the most acrid example of a shrewish wife. Is this, her evil reputation, just? or is it in great measure a bubble blown by the malice of learned bookworms? I know little or nothing of any of these gentry or their works, but one's mere instinct flashes considerable light upon the nature of the species. Ironical Destiny will generally have it that Dryasdust be married; when married, he is of course henpecked, for women (like Henry VIII.) love a man, and therefore despise a bookworm. Bookworm, feeling himself too weak for open and honourable warfare, betakes himself to a characteristic revenge, safe, cowardly, professional, honey-sweet; in the most scurrilous Latin he can command (and Latin is said to be rather rich in scurrility) he libels women and marriage, and retails from the inexhaustible stores of his anecdotage how Xantippe emptied the vessels of her wrath upon the sacred head of Socrates. Xantippe is the lay-

figure which he kicks and punches in lieu of Mrs. Dryasdust, of whom he is very properly afraid; he conceits himself, Dryasdust, to be a fair counterpart of Socrates, the sublime imperturbable philosopher; and all the Dryasdust mummies throughout Europe, whose wives do not understand Latin, can mumble and chuckle over the tidbit of recondite ribaldry. The withered old wretches! Their blood gets reddish and lukewarm, their wrinkles interwrinkle and their dead eyes twinkle, when they come across a Phryne, a Lais, a Rhodopis, a Helen, or any other lady of *not* doubtful character; but they can find no words vile enough for a decent and respectable married woman, who did her best to bring up a lawful family honestly, who stood up for her own and the children's rights, and who used her woman's weapon with the most feminine sharpness and determination.

I do not want to say a word against Socrates. I am ready to cry with as much devotion as anybody, *Sancte Socrates, ora pro nobis!*—but surely he will be all the more likely to pray for us if we venture to say a good word for his much-injured wife.

In his Apology (as taken down by Plato, the well-known reporter for the *Times*, and *Ages*) Socrates himself says, section 9—"Still therefore I go about and search and inquire into these things, in obedience to the god, both among citizens and strangers, if I think any one of them is wise; and when he appears to me not to be so, I take the part of the god, and show that he is not wise. And in consequence of this occupation I have no leisure to attend in any considerable degree to the affairs of the State or my own; but I am in the greatest poverty through my devotion to the service of the god."

Again, section 18—"But that I am a person who has been given by the Deity to this city, you may discern from hence; for it is not like the ordinary conduct of men that

I should have neglected all my own affairs and suffered my private interest to be neglected for so many years, and that I should constantly attend to your concerns, addressing myself to each of you separately, like a father or elder brother, persuading you to the pursuit of virtue. And if I had derived any profit from this course, and had received pay for my exhortations, there would have been some reason for my conduct; but now you see yourselves that my accusers, who have so shamelessly calumniated me in everything else, have not had the impudence to charge me with this, and to bring witnesses to prove that I ever either exacted or demanded any reward. And I think that I produce a sufficient proof that I speak the truth—namely, my poverty."

In the first section he states that he is more than seventy years old; and in section 23 that he has three sons, one grown up, and two boys: so Xantippe must have been considerably younger than himself.*

At the conclusion of *The Banquet* we read: "Aristophanes, Agathon, and Socrates had alone stood it out, and were still drinking out of a great goblet which they passed round and round. . . . Aristophanes first awoke, and then, it being broad daylight, Agathon. Socrates having put them to sleep, went away, Aristodemus following him, and coming to the Lyceum he washed himself as he would have done anywhere else, and after having spent the day there in his accustomed manner, went home in the evening." One scarcely need add that his accustomed manner of spending the day was lounging about discussing anything and everything with anybody and everybody whom he could seduce into discussion.

In the *Phædo*, section 9, the narrator, whose name has

* He had two sons by his first wife, Myrtone; the third, of course one of the boys, was by Xantippe.

become the title of the piece, says: "When we entered, we found Socrates just freed from his bonds, and Xantippe, you know her, holding his little boy and sitting by him. As soon as Xantippe saw us, she wept aloud, and said such things as women usually do on such occasions—as, 'Socrates, your friends will now converse with you for the last time, and you with them.' But Socrates, looking towards Crito, said, 'Crito, let some one take her home.' Upon which some of Crito's attendants led her away, wailing and beating herself. But Socrates, sitting up in bed, drew up his leg, and rubbed it with his hand, and as he rubbed it, said: 'What an unaccountable thing, my friends, that seems to be which men call pleasure; *etc.*, *etc.*, *etc.*'" A wonderfully cold-blooded touch, this, in the divine *Phædo.*

Socrates, engaged in sublime discourse about the immortality of the human soul, cannot concern himself about mundane wife and children, but after he has drunk the poison, we read in the last section that the friends about him began weeping and lamenting, and he said: "What are you doing, my admirable friends? I indeed, for this reason chiefly, sent away the women, that they might not commit any folly of this kind." His last words were, "Crito, we owe a cock to Æsculapius; pay it, therefore, and do not neglect it."

Now, how stood the case as between Socrates and Xantippe, husband and wife? This is the sole point for us here, and the public relations of Socrates, the sage and martyr, to the world in general are quite beside the question. An unfortunate woman (would that she had left her own statement of the case!) who appears to have been no less warm-hearted than hot-tempered, has the foolish goodness to marry a man who is not only much older than herself and absurdly ugly, but who is also a public character and a philosopher. As he was well up in years when he

married her, and had been preaching in season and out of season ever since he could attract a listener, on the fine text, *Know Thyself*, he ought then to have known himself quite well enough to know that he had no right to go and get married again, to know that his undomestic habits were past cure. He had a decent trade in the stone-cutting line; and though his statuary work was not much more like that of Phidias than his own features and form were like those of Lysis or Alcibiades, it appears that with industry he might have chiselled out a comfortable livelihood if he could not have carved out a fortune. But, by his own confession, he scarcely ever worked at his trade. He was an incorrigible idler, always lounging about Athens, arguing, questioning, exhorting; chaffing and ruffling the big-wigs in the midst of groups of young swells, for whom the fun was almost as good as that of quail-fighting.

'He boasted that he never took payment for his lessons. But if the Sophists, for teaching what he considered to be useless or noxious, took the highest prices they could get, why should not he, who neglected his trade to teach what he considered the most important truths, have taken at least enough payment to keep his home comfortable? He himself was constitutionally indifferent to all the common circumstances of life; did not care what he ate or what he drank, was almost insensible to heat and cold, without an effort could remain teetotaller for months, and then without an effort drink the most seasoned toper blind drunk, and walk off to spend a sober day as if nothing had happened; but were his wife and children of the same constitution? Was it fair, was it kind, to make them endure the same hardship as himself, although they felt it keenly and he scarcely felt it at all? Nor, with all his indifference to the good things of this life, does he seem to have fared so badly on the whole. Some of the best houses in Athens were

open to him when he chose to share in their festivities; young fellows of fortune were delighted to have the company of the amusing old vagabond at their wicked little suppers. These fellows were rich enough and liberal enough to coin their gratitude and admiration into cash that would have gladdened the heart of Xantippe and filled the bellies of those two boys.

Let any respectable English matron try to conceive the case of Mrs. Socrates, when Mr. Socrates came home one evening after an absence of two days and a night. Be sure that he had done no work and brought home no money for a long time, be sure that she had not a decent gown to her back, be sure that if the children had dined scantily on bread and olives, the dinner had been procured with the greatest difficulty. Remember that she was never invited to the fine parties he frequented, and that every day of her life she must have heard her gossips cry shame on this disreputable husband of hers, and hint with awe and horror at the queer tales told about some of the women and young men with whom he was most intimate. Where has my lord been these two days? Roasting Gorgias, "selling" Protagoras, cutting up Euthyphron into mincemeat. And the night? Having the jolliest supper at Agathon's, with the most terrible wits and the superbest swells in Athens. And with music, and girls lasciviously dancing? No; they sent away the female flute-player, and had a quiet evening delivering orations in honour of Love; until Alcibiades came in nobly intoxicated, and they all drank hard as long as they could, Socrates drinking hard until broad daylight. Delivering orations in honour of Love, with his lawful wife at home in her lonely bed, hungry and wretched, and horribly anxious! One admits the charm of the symposium; never since has there been such talk from such company save at the Old Mermaid; our finest swells are but boors

and blockheads to these wonderful Athenian gentlemen; what, however, hindered Socrates from going home to wash in the morning?

Let the respectable English matron judge whether Xantippe had or had not the right to scold and rage, and even to pour out vessels of wrath. It is very well for us, enchanted with the fruits of his interminable talking, to admire him; it is better for us, spirit-stirred by the story of his martyrdom, to venerate and love him; but "follow him home"—what woman would be in the place of his wife?

Should the reader, however, assert that in this respect, as in so many others, Socrates approached closely to the ideal character of a Christian man, I think it would be rash to dispute the assertion. For one cannot but remember the texts:—"Then one said unto him, Behold thy mother and thy brethren stand without, desiring to speak with thee. But he answered and said unto him that told him, Who is my mother? and who are my brethren? And he stretched forth his hand toward his disciples, and said, Behold my mother and my brethren!" And again, "If any man come to me, and hate not his father and mother, and wife and children, and brethren and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple." And again, "Verily I say unto you, There is no man that hath left house, or parents, or brethren, or wife, or children, for the kingdom of God's sake, who shall not receive manifold more in this present time, and in the world to come life everlasting."

We reverence Socrates and we adore Jesus. In our age and country, however, Xantippe would be obliged to go to the workhouse, and the parish authorities would prosecute her husband for not supporting her and his family; as for Jesus, he would be brought before the magistrates as a vagrant, and assuredly on examination be forwarded to a

lunatic asylum. Those heathen Greeks put Socrates to death soon after he was seventy: those unbelieving Jews, sharper than the Greeks, got Jesus crucified when he was only thirty-three: we Christian English are too enlightened and tolerant to make such men glorious martyrs; a parish prosecution and a doctor's certificate would extinguish them much more effectually; and no heroic fortitude, no sublime enthusiasm, could elevate the victims and cover the prosecutors with infamy.

We have perhaps one living writer with genius and learning and wisdom and fairness enough to picture truly the conjugal life of Saint Socrates and shrew Xantippe: need I say that this writer is George Eliot? One would give something for the picture.

SYMPATHY.

1865.

—o—

I.—WITH OTHERS.

In the uncompleted essay entitled *A Defence of Poetry*, which, with the enthusiasm and ornate beauty of an ode, preserves throughout the logical precision and directness of an elegant mathematical demonstration, Shelley writes: "*A man to be greatly good must imagine intensely and comprehensively; he must put himself in the place of another and of many others; the pains and pleasures of his species must become his own.*" I do not intend to discuss here the question in chief with which Shelley is concerned in the passage from which the above sentence is cited—namely, whether imagination is or is not "the great instrument of moral good;" my business is with the obvious corollary, that intense and comprehensive sympathy must be as rare as intense and comprehensive imagination, if the latter is indeed of the essence of the former. This corollary, so obvious to the first glance as to seem a truism, is soon found to be a strangely unpleasant bit of wisdom to carry about with one. Who likes to believe that it is altogether vain to look for the blessing of deep sympathy in any of his friends or acquaintances, save such as are endowed with intense and comprehensive imagination?

We all know how Thackeray delighted to dally with this theme: but he never attempted seriously and exhaustively to grapple with it—nor, indeed, with any other problem in whose intricacies our actual social system is heavily involved. None more sharply than he could rally the host and the guests after dinner, over the wine; yet the thought seems never to have entered his head (at least in the latter and more famous portion of his career) that he was not at all compelled to be present, a humbug in a gathering of humbugs, that he was quite free to abstain from the dinner and the wine, and that he could have taken up a more honourable and commanding position of attack *out*side the mansion. In his after-dinner fashion, however, he was always ready to remind a husband that his faithful spouse, bone of his bone and flesh of his flesh, could sleep by his side in the most comfortable unconsciousness of the tooth-ache racking him through the interminable hours of the night; and to hint to the youthful lover that the angel of his adoration, while appearing to listen with delight so bashful and sweet to all his fervid nonsense, was presumably wondering whether that trinket was chosen by himself, hoping that he would go before the dressmaker arrived, doubting whether she looked fresh after so much dissipation, perchance even comparing him, not at all to his advantage, with Captain A——, that dear delightful handsome younger son. And when we had enjoyed the half-pleasant, half-bitter banter, the cheering reflection was left: If one cannot hope for genuine sympathy even in the wife of his bosom or the maid of his heart, how fatuous to expect it in mere friends and acquaintances. Vanity of vanities! all is vanity!

Is genuine sympathy really so rare? Let us try to test it in the richest ores. If it is to be found anywhere in large quantities, it surely should be in works of beneficence,

in what we call charities as if they were full of the virtue. Yet immediately we analyse any charitable action of our own, however pure it may have been from common alliage of ostentation and subtle self-interest, we find that it was much less sympathetic than it at first appeared. It was not the result of a *feeling with* its object; but was rather the result of a process strictly analogous to the process used in solving an algebraic equation, almost as purely intellectual and non-cordial; dealing not with the very things in question, but with familiar abstract symbols that, until the solution is obtained, are scarcely in our thought connected, much less are identified, with those things themselves. Thus we see a blind beggar, and pity him, and give him alms. Does our pity deserve to be called sympathy? Can we, without the grossest exaggeration, pretend that we *feel with* him the miseries of his blindness? Assuredly not; but we have heard and read much of these miseries, and, therefore, blindness represents to us (almost as abstractedly as x and y represent the *horses* and *miles* or whatever else may be the subject-matter of an algebraic problem) inability for common work, privation of common pleasures and comforts; and, so, just claims on our pity and help. A boy, with a nature quite as good as our own, or even much better than our own, but who has not had our experience, who cannot translate and expand the symbol *blindness* into all the dolorous facts of life which it represents, would not improbably show *his* sympathy by an attempt to trip or trick the blind man, and if the attempt succeeded, would certainly approve it as a jolly lark.

If our feeling of the blind beggar's misery approached in intensity his own, it is plain that, instead of giving him pence and passing on, we should do our utmost to ensure him subsistence for life and lavish on him daily the ten-

derest cares. So far is sympathy from abounding in the works called "charitable," that the people who are most energetic in such works are usually very unsympathetic. Methodical, not imaginative, not excitable, often narrow-minded and dull, they appear to have devoted themselves to the relief of the suffering of others, not because feeling it acutely, but because the rigorous algebraic process has forced them to adopt charitable endeavours as the sole true solution of the problem of life. Like surgeons, they operate the better for being somewhat callous. They act from the head more than from the heart, on principle, not on sentiment; and shame the common sentimentalists. As for the "charity" of those who in giving to the poor lend to the Lord, and carefully reckon for compound interest in good repute here and celestial happiness hereafter, we need not analyse for sympathy in *that.*

But even if general beneficence may contain, and does, in fact, usually contain, very little sympathy, it surely must be sympathy of a high standard which constitutes the surpassing value of true friendship? Yet, suppose that a heavy calamity falls upon one of our dearest friends, one of the two or three whom we think we love and trust with our whole heart and mind (the case of one supreme perfect friend, a case of the highest interest in many respects, I pass over here because it is so rare; one might more easily discover two other such writers as Montaigne and Etienne de la Boëtie than two other such friends). The intelligence of this calamity shocks us; the thought of it saddens us persistently for a short time, intermittently for several weeks and even months; if we can do anything to lighten the burden or to replace the loss, we will not only do it, but we will do it in despite of obstacles that perhaps would altogether dishearten us from exertion if the case of our friend were our own. Yet our passion of suffering and sorrow is

humiliatingly mild and brief compared with that which affects our friend. Our purest and most precious friendship is found to contain so little of the fine gold of sympathy, that we inwardly blush for the poverty of our own nature; and our words of overstrained tenderness and often of conscious unwisdom, our exertions desperately resolute and often in conscious violation of justice, owe their excess to a fierce desire (which is not less haughty with self-esteem than generous with kindness) to make up for the lack of feeling. By word and deed we may announce the true solution of the problem, but we have won this solution by the aid of the algebraic process, using familiar abstract symbols intellectually; word and deed have not been the immediate outcome of the heart filled with a passion in itself sufficient to produce them.

It may be worth noting here that a woman consoles so well a sorrow with whose circumstances she is personally acquainted, because of her wealth of cordial sympathy; and that she can, at the same time, remain so indifferent to the greatest remote calamities, calamities afflicting nations, because she is not expert in this algebra which the heart borrows from the head, and by which a man will arrive at correct results more or less generally applicable to events, without being much concerned with the facts themselves of which the events are the aggregates. Women have the intense, and not the comprehensive imagination. Both together would, of course, be more powerful than either alone; but when they are separated, as usually in life we find them, the former is more vigorously operative than the latter. If every one sympathised deeply with the few people always immediately around him, the world would be full of intense and experienced and ever-accessible sympathy; if every one sympathised with all humanity in general, the world might be full of ignorant and lukewarm sympathy

never within reach when most wanted: thus Jesus enjoins, Love *thy neighbour* as thyself.

Returning to the mainroad from this byeway, we remark that if we ourselves have been recently stricken by a calamity very like that which makes desolate our friend, what we term our sympathy with him will be much more intense and enduring. That is to say, we show him all the fine gold which even absolute friendship could claim, and tell him that it is his; and then quietly use three-fourths of it for our own need. And this brings us to the consideration of what may be called *autopathic sympathy*, a contradiction in terms precisely suited to a contradiction in ideas. Thus it is true that "sympathy" of a very low standard (so low that the alliage rather than the precious metal has the right to give its name to the compound), but not too low to give a slight extra value to the common currency, is to be found circulating everywhere in the ordinary business and other relations of life. For such sympathy, however, we scarcely need to go out of ourselves in order to feel with another; the feeling is habitual in ourselves and for ourselves. It is such sympathy as does not demand self-forgetting, much less self-abnegation. Thus it is easy for a man absorbed in commerce to sympathise in an apparently considerable degree with another who has become bankrupt, or who has netted thousands by a fortunate speculation;* for a matron to sympathise with another whose husband or child is ill; for a young man to sympathise with another wounded in battle and decorated for valour; for a nubile maiden to sympathise with a bride. For those

* The term *netted* is very happy as applied to the results of a modern fortunate speculation; the speculator being at once fisherman and retiarius. Often, in fact, as many human beings as hundreds of pounds sterling have been caught in the meshes of the operation.

As for *speculation*, it cannot be too often repeated that this word, which once meant lofty philosophic contemplation, now means legalised gambling.

severally fancy themselves in the positions of these, with the vividness of a fancy which may easily and quickly become fact. And cheap as is such autopathic sympathy, its value is still further diminished by its precariousness, in that it is always liable to be changed by fortune into jealousy or contempt.

What is our first reception of some sudden intelligence rising far out of the ordinary level of life into horror or rapture? We grin or laugh, and ejaculate wondering incredulity. We do not laugh because really incredulous, but affect disbelief in prompt apology for our laughter; and the laugh or grin (for this latter unpleasant word is the more accurate) is the first silly trick of distraction from the humiliating consciousness that we are quite bankrupt in the instant sympathy demanded by the story. We grin with just the awkward mixture of shame and hypocrisy with which one laughs who would fain turn his serious promise into a jest, when he finds that he would rather not fulfil it.

And here an interesting bye-question occurs:—How is it that people who have so little sympathy to bestow upon the tragedy of real life, can afford so much for the tragedy of plays and novels? The sneer, that they have a comfortable feeling all the while they read or stare that sympathy with the imaginary woes of imaginary personages will not entail corresponding generous action, does not fairly answer the question; for, as I have remarked above, generous action is much more common than generous and cordial sympathy; we are nearly always ready to do more for friends or strangers overtaken by calamity than we can bring ourselves to feel for them. The main reason may be that, in the drama or the romance, we have the tragedy of long years separated from all the commonplace circumstances that would envelop and confuse it in real life, concentrated

so as to be witnessed or read in a few hours, and yet evolved through multitudinous phases to the supreme catastrophe, which catastrophe is left always absolute by the fall of the curtain or the conclusion of the book. Add also that the reader or spectator is at leisure and passively expectant, open to receive and avid to drink in emotion when book in hand or at the theatre; while in the shop or street of actual life, he is busy with mind shut on some purpose and often worried.

The sudden intelligence, which we have supposed ourselves to hear, gave us the catastrophe without the previous gradual exaltation which should lead our mood to the high level thereof. Ordinary life-experience offers us the gradual leading-up, but through such long and obscure and bewildering paths, and with so many intermissions, that when we have reached the summit, we are no more in a condition to care for the prospect. Had the true intelligence been conveyed to us in a story long enough for ordered evolution while brief enough for intensity, we should doubtless have been affected by it as by the most highly-wrought fiction—were we at leisure in repose to attend to it adequately. But in this case, the sympathy at the end is not simple and pure; we have been working at the intellectual algebra during the careful development; the pity and terror with which we are purged is a compound drug prepared with science and exhibited with art.

Without desiring to be cynical (although my temperament is prone enough to cynicism), I am forced by these reflections, and others of a like nature which may easily be found in their company, to the conclusion that intense and comprehensive sympathy is really as rare among mankind as intense and comprehensive imagination. Like gold, it is common enough in small pieces (not altogether unalloyed) for the petty emergencies of life; but if you want to draw

for a large sum, you receive it, if you receive it at all, in paper, not in the genuine metal—in representative, and not in fact.

In thus analysing sympathy itself, I do not pretend to estimate its worth in the world, or to estimate its worth were it pure universally. I know that it may be urged, and has been urged, that if every one were always truly sympathising with every one about him, he could lead no life of his own, could lead no coherent life at all; and that all men being similarly affected, the world would be inconceivably madder than it is; somewhat like that world without vice seen by Asem the Man-hater, as Goldsmith tells us. I know also that if we were every one as Midas, digestible food would be scarce among men. Yet gold as it exists in the world, has a certain considerable value, and one may test actual coinage or jewellery, and fix the proportion of pure metal therein, without considering the question whether it is desirable that all currency were gold unalloyed, or the wilder question whether (as most things are inferior in value to gold) the world would not be improved in value were it all golden through and through.

In speaking of the practically beneficent people, who are so commonly slow and dull in feeling, I said that they shame the common sentimentalists. This is true; it is true likewise, however, that the uncommon sentimentalists, the men and women supremely sympathetic, are the very flower and crown of our race; they are the poets who are more than great wits, the heroes who are greater than conquerors, the mystics who are wiser than sages, the saints who are purer than theologians, the martyrs more sublime than any church or creed; they are Pascal and Leighton, Joan of Arc and Charlotte Corday, Shelley and Jesus. So rare and priceless is genuine sympathy in and for itself, whether effectuated in action or not; so much purer and

higher must be the nature which can fulfil the precept, "*Love thy neighbour as thyself*," than that which may obey the commandment, "*Do unto others that which ye would they should do unto you;*" so true is it that "*Her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much;*" that there are Sentimentalists whom we cherish for their sentiments alone more dearly than the great working philanthropists, whom history orders us to love, but whom we only manage to esteem. To a prisoner who knew the life and works of Goldsmith, this poet was probably more dear than was Howard himself, though Howard had ameliorated that prisoner's doom. Despite her austere Calvinism and his free Paganism, Scotland cherishes Burns as the very idol of her inmost heart, because his sympathy was so broad and deep. And we love and reverence Shelley above all other famous men of his generation, because these lines in *Julian and Maddalo* are true to himself above all those other men:—

> But *me*, whose heart a stranger's tear might wear
> As water-drops the sandy fountain stone;
> Who loved and pitied all things, and could moan
> For woes which others feel not, and could see
> The absent in the glass of phantasy,
> And near the poor and trampled sit and weep,
> Following the captive to his dungeon deep;
> *Me, who am as a nerve o'er which do creep*
> *The else-unfelt oppressions of this earth.*

II.—WITH PAST SELF.

It will not, perhaps, appear to us so strange that a common man can feel but little sympathy with others, when we have reflected upon the fact that at any one time he can feel but little sympathy with himself as he was at innumerable other times; that is, in general, with his past self. For intense

and enduring self-sympathy is really as rare as intense and enduring sympathy with others. All of us, or nearly all of us who are mature, look back upon our own childhood not with much real sympathy, but with a certain compassion partly contemptuous and partly tender; the proportions of the contempt and the tenderness varying with the various situations we recall, but the former being seldom altogether absent. If in the decline of life the contempt may be surcharged with envy, yet the sympathy with our young selves remains as unreal. In our maturity successive years seem to sympathise deeply with each other; but not days, and still less hours. And when we thoughtfully consider two consecutive lustrums or decades, we find that the sympathy between them is far from intense. As Cowley puts it with such awkward ingenuity in his apology for the imaginary desertion of an imaginary mistress:

> Five years ago (says story) I loved you,
> For which you call me most inconstant now;
> Pardon me, Madame, you mistake the man;
> For I am not the same that I was then:
> No flesh is now the same 'twas then in me,
> And that my mind is changed yourself may see.
> The same thoughts to retain still, and intents,
> Were more inconstant far: for accidents
> Must of all things most strangely inconstant prove,
> If from one subject they t' another move:
> My members then, the father members were
> From whence these take their birth that now are here;
> If, then, this body love what th' other did,
> 'Twere incest, which by nature is forbid.

(Pretty rhyme, rhythm and construction, for a poet who was scholar and gentleman, half-a-century after Spenser and Shakespeare!)

First let us consider the hours and the days. Suppose that I am engaged on the same piece of work (a little essay,

for instance) two evenings in succession; it is probable enough that during the one I feel bright and cheerful, and during the other dull and cynical. In the one mood I have no sympathy with myself as in the other mood. I may write on in much the same strain both evenings, if I have set myself a certain thesis to maintain, and noted down beforehand the leading points and illustrations; but if I were not working taskwork on a fixed piece, I might compose some joyous verses the one evening and a melancholy palinode the other. And not only is the second evening unable to sympathise with the first, it is absolutely unable to understand the first. It may read what was then written (supposing each to have written from its mood), and in a sense it understands the words; but the animating spirit, the essence of the composition, it cannot seize, it cannot realise. If two opposite moods could thoroughly comprehend each other, they might discuss the difference between them, and a man might reasonably hope to arrive at some stable conviction: the two, however, are mutually unintelligible as if they were a couple of workmen on the Tower of Babel after the confusion of tongues; each is despotically absolute in its own hour, and neither will nor can then hear what the other would plead, and the other itself is then a mute slave: we are governed by a succession in mysterious permutation of unlike-minded tyrants, all alike deaf in the hours of their supremacy, all alike dumb in the hours of their subjection.

Take the case of religious faith. Foolish persons put themselves to much trouble and anxiety in efforts to convert others to their own belief or disbelief. A superficial uniformity may be adopted by a large number together; but among those who are thoughtful and really examine the dogmas and themselves, not only is it certain that no two men can have thoroughly the same faith, it is also certain

that no two thoughtful hours of any one man's life can have this. You can get a thousand men to wear all the same kind of dress, to have all the same number on caps and shoulder-straps, to bear all rifles and bayonets of the same pattern, to go through the same motions at the same time, to rush all together into collision with a mass of foreign men exceedingly like themselves, killing who can and getting killed who can't help it; but you can never make these thousand become all of the same stature, figure, countenance, temperament, thought, and feeling. You can make of men a machine militant, but not a machine human through and through; just so you can make of men a Church militant, but not a Church human through and through. You may drill the minds of a people into the superficial uniformity of a Church or sect, and practically you seem to have succeeded in the propagation of your creed: here, however, analogy between Army and Church terminates fatally for the latter; the practical end of an army is force, and as banded force your army fulfils its end; but for the Church, the force of practical success has nothing to do with religious success, is rather the ruin thereof, in that it, the mean, usurps the throne of the end; the essence of a man's religion is the relation of his being to God (if he has a God), mankind, and the universe, and the more profound the spiritual and intellectual experience the more are these relations discovered to vary not only in different men but in different moods of the same man. Fifty-two Sundays in the year a good man may recite the same creed and confession, and preach from the same theory and axioms, and yet no two of these Sundays feel and comprehend in precisely the same spirit.

We are wont to speak lightly of these variations and antagonisms of mood, because we have found in the course of years that no one mood sways us persistently for a

long period ; each comes and goes, goes and comes, while the life with its consciousness of personality continues. Generally speaking, not universally, no one's life is settled by a mood. Similarly, because it is not fatal, we make light of toothache, however terrible be the agony of its paroxysms. There are nevertheless cases in which a dark mood has dominated a whole life, just as there are cases in which toothache is neuralgia : *La Grande Chartreuse* is the temple-prison of hypochondria. But the character of any one mood, however impressive and awful, is not here my theme ; it is the irreconcileable and essential antagonism between different moods, confounding all philosophy, making each of us a bundle of antinomies miraculously coherent. When Emerson (in his fine essay on Montaigne)* says that he is not troubled by this, that we must reckon one mood with another and take the average, he is speaking practically, he is recommending us to do what we ordinarily practise in our daily and yearly life. It gives us a rough and ready balance-sheet, accurate enough for most social purposes ; but philosophically it is altogether beside the investigation, its philosophical value in the summation of life equals exactly naught. Nor even practically is it quite sufficient for our rude appraisals of one another : the worth of a poet, for instance, to the mass of us is not at all the average worth of him in his mature hours ; it is, on the contrary, the worth and the mood of him in a very few hours of what we call inspiration, and we totally ignore in our estimate nine hundred and ninety-nine out of a thousand of his hours with the moods that swayed them : consider,

* One may remark that this notion of Emerson's is sheer vulgar Yankee-republican, though he is usually a cosmopolite. It amounts to this : Give every hour a vote, white and black, and let the majority decide ! But, as I urge in the sequel of the paragraph (and as no one knows better than does Emerson), the vote of one fateful hour may outweigh the votes of all the other hours in the life put together.

also, how many hours and moods are taken count of in our estimate of the lives of Mutius Scævola, Codrus, Leonidas, Stephen the proto-martyr.

I wish to draw into clear light the facts that, in two moods of two several hours not a day asunder, a man's relations to the most serious problems of life, may be and often are essentially opposite; that the one may burn with hope and faith, and the other lour black with doubt and despair; and that there is no possibility of conciliating (philosophically) this antagonism, since the two are mutually unintelligible. As George Herbert exclaims (Giddiness, 99) :—

> O what a thing is man! how far from power,
> From settled peace and rest!
> He is some twenty several men at least
> Each several hour.

It is only in rare moments of meditation that we can discern how black and profound are these abysses yawning between the successive hours of our life, and how impotent is our reason to overleap or overbridge them. In some manner or other, mysteriously, our being continues across them, and, contemning reason, advances alike through philosophic voids and over the firm ground of common sense, wingless treading solidly the air as the land, until, at length, it plunges into the abyss of death, not more profound and not more mysterious than hundreds of abysses it has traversed triumphing, not more wonderful than that gulf of sleep through which it has passed from every night to every morn. From this abyss of death we cannot avert our eyes, its darkness inscrutable we cannot ignore; but the abysses which precede it, and which our existence manages to overpass, we are glad not to look steadily down into, lest we should feel dizzy and terrified and overwhelmed; and thus we commonly conceive a lifetime as a continuous

career over a continuous road; while, in fact, the *Vision of Mirza* is true not only physically but mentally and spiritually, and a life-course is but a series of stepping-stones, fragmentary piers and broken arches, projecting from the midst of a shoreless flood ever dark and unfathomed around our feet. If every hour of a life sympathised perfectly with every other, the life would be in eternity, not in time.

Now for a longer period, suppose a decade. Every one will admit that Smith now, being thirty, may sympathise much more with the present Brown, with the cardinal thoughts and ruling sentiments of Brown, than with his past-self Smith as he was at twenty. What, then, is this strong and tyrannical interest which Smith undoubtedly cherishes in his own peculiar individuality, as *one* from childhood to the present day, and which is so immeasurably stronger than the interest he can take in the personality of Brown? The question is very subtle; the subject-matter, whether really simple or really compound, seems to defy analysis; yet the patient analyser may discover that it is not absolutely insoluble, although he cannot master and define its elements. And first, to render the tribute due to the title, I think that we may safely affirm that sympathy, a feeling with, or identical feeling, is not by any means a main element in this self-love and self-assertion which make the Smith of to-day retrotend his sublime *Ego* to birth and protend it until death, "itself, by itself, solely, one everlastingly, and single;" which make thousands and millions of Smiths protend said *Ego* after death for ever and ever; and which make certain Platonic Smiths retrotend the same at least a few myriads of years, if not for ever and ever, before birth in this poor little planet. Smith, aged thirty, takes under his wing and absorbs into his noble being the Smith aged twenty, although he does not feel very much sympathy with that remote young fellow. Smith in

this present hour is the head of the multitudinous procession of Smiths, the temporary chief of the clan Smith, comprising every Smith of every past hour since birth, and destined to comprise every Smith of every future hour until death; each hour in its turn assuming the chieftainship, and then sinking into the ranks when its successor emerges: the chief of the clan always admits all the inferior members to be his blood-relations in precisely graduated degrees of consanguinity, because their united fealty and homage constitute his power and lordship.

Smith holds as a necessary truth that through all changes of development and distortion and mutilation (and decay, if his grand climacteric be past) he, Smith, has been in this world one and the same individual. This conviction he considers axiomatic, intuitive; all endeavours at demonstration only trouble and obscure its clearness: any one who mistakes or even seriously doubts his own persistent identity must be insane. Smith, however, does not pretend to know exactly how and why the Smith of ten, acting upon and being acted upon by the circumstances of twenty years, has become the Smith of thirty rather than the Brown of thirty; nor how and why the Brown of ten in the same twenty years has not become the Smith rather than the Brown of thirty: he believes that the peculiarities of each maturity were severally in germ in each infancy, without professing to discriminate and define the germs, and without any but the most vague and unscientific notions as to the respective processes of development. Why should he identify his present self with the Smith of ten rather than with the Brown of ten, even when he happens to have more sympathy (such as it is) with the latter than with the former boy?

Here let me note, before proceeding, that the difference is much greater between childhood and maturity than

between the ship of Theseus first and last, or between the original knife and the knife with a new blade and a new handle. For in the ship the schematism has *obviously* not altered, the first plan or idea has obtained steadily and visibly through all the successive replacements of parts; we term it one and the same ship throughout, because merely the *matter* has changed, the *form* conspicuously enduring. But in the case of from childhood to manhood, the original idea is not thus conspicuously and definitely preserved; we can only believe that in some mysterious manner it actually is preserved: here change of matter is complicated with change of form, with what we term organic development. Even as to the body, there are many cases in which, for all we know and see, Smith might as naturally in accordance with his childish constitution have grown up tall, broad, and stout, as small, slender, and lean; while as to the mind, nine biographies out of ten (in despite of too enthusiastic biographers) prove that sharpest human vision cannot discern the elements of relation between infancy and childhood and maturity, and that even were these elements given, the most puissant human science would be utterly impotent to calculate approximately the life-orbit.

Of course, Smith's assurance of his lifelong identity is based upon his own memory and upon the memory of those with whom he has come into most frequent contact. Smith might be the Smith of to-day, without remembering anything of his past self, as the rose is none the less beautiful and fragrant for having no memory of its youth in the bud. But the lifelong Smith is the creature of memory. He remembers innumerable events, thoughts, sensations, perceptions, emotions, words, actions, all strung like beads upon a long-drawn line called Smith. He also remembers numerous events, words, actions, emotions, strung upon another line called Brown, but these he does not remember

so clearly. (Yet, in looking back twenty years, he will undoubtedly be confused as to the line, whether Smith or Brown, on which some of these beads were actually strung: he will not, perhaps, give any of his own beads to Brown, but he will adopt some of Brown's beads as his own; and thus these which *were* not his own, now *are* his own.) This personal memory of Smith's is day by day and hour by hour supported, corrected, strengthened, intensified, by the memories of Brown, Jones, and Robinson, who are continually making him responsible for past events in this past Smith's life, often when he would gladly enough forget or renounce them. Where this external corrective cannot be applied (as in the case of passions, aspirations, unwritten and unspoken thoughts), Smith's personal memory is apt to make the oddest mistakes, beautifying and ennobling, and in general exaggerating, for the aggrandisement of the present Smith, or forcing unconsciously into obvious harmony with the present Smith: thus all subjective autobiographies are full of deception and self-deception, of illusion and delusion; as Goethe's *Dichtung und Wahrheit*, Rousseau's *Confessions*, De Quincey's *Opium Eater* and *Suspiria de Profundis*.

This memory and deeply ploughed experience of his responsibility for past Smith is perhaps more essentially than even his own personal interior memory the strength and stay of Smith's conviction that he is one and the same individual throughout life. From his childhood all the people about him have been continually saying to him and acting towards him in the sense of, "You promised this, now you must perform it; you did so and so, now you must bear the consequences; you had such a thing, now you must pay for it." And he has long since learnt that it is quite useless and worse than useless for him to endeavour denial or evasion of this responsibility, although Smith of

to-day often heartily curses that scoundrelly or reckless Smith of yesterday for bringing him into such scrapes, and wishes that he had been Brown yesterday instead of Smith. Smith of to-day is a very cool, self-possessed, practical man: why should he be called upon to ruin his prospects in life because a fellow, with whom he has just now next to nothing in common, a hot, excited, sentimental blockhead, swore infinite love last evening to humid eyes and a soft little hand in that confounded moonlight? Smith to-day is a boy sickish and with the heartburn, whom the mere sight of sweetstuff nauseates; wherefore should he be compelled to deliver up his money (which would purchase a paintbox or the *Arabian Nights*) because a greedy fellow with an imbecile fondness for sweetstuff gorged himself disgustingly yesterday? But so it is: day after day, and year after year, poor Smith of the present learns more and more thoroughly that he must answer for the deeds of every detestable Smith of every hour of the past; and so he is fain to adopt these shadows into himself (the worst and most annoying of all poor relations), and make the best he can of the whole lot. The thousands of Smiths of the thousands of past hours are a heavy retinue to support, but at any rate they enormously swell the dignity of *The Smith*, who is always the Smith of the present hour.

It is true that the interior personal memory is not continually continuous. At one time, when we look along the line, many of the beads are out of sight; there seem great gaps. At another time these gaps are glittering with jewels, and there are gaps where before gleamed beads. Hence we all feel that the seeming gaps are but loops and festoons; and that if the line be drawn tense enough, every one of the thick-strung beads will be ranged visible on its straightness. Just so we feel that the moods and phases of our being for which we do not care at the present moment, will

have their turn of domination as they have had many turns before, will be really ourselves in their time. As our so-called sympathy with others is mainly not a *feeling with* them, but the result of an intellectual algebraic process; so our sympathy with our past selves is mainly not an identical *feeling with* the various past phases of our being, but a result of complicated personal experience and memory, the most striking fact in the domain of the association of ideas. As for our sympathy with our future selves, it derives from a pure illusion: when we imagine ourselves in the future, we always imagine our very present selves projected in time.

Readers of the *Arabian Nights* and *The Taming of the Shrew* must have been struck by the ease and readiness with which Abou Hassan and Christopher Sly are persuaded that their real past lives were delusive dreams, and that the present delusions are realities. The wise story-teller and the wise poet seem both to have considered the conviction of personal identity, the conviction of whose mysteriousness and intuitiveness and necessary truth we have heard so much, as being very much at the mercy of those around us! Can we contrive to fancy a Smith, who, for one whole week, has not been by anybody held responsible for Smith-past; a Smith at whom everybody looks with astonishment when he comes to fulfil a promise, and with more astonishment when he comes to claim the fulfilment of one made to him; a Smith whom all the people he meets persist in making responsible for Brown, paying him what they owe Brown and demanding from him payment of Brown's debts; this exchange of the personalities being brought to bear upon him thoroughly in every relation of life? At the end of the week would this poor Smith be sure of his identity? would he believe himself now insane, or that he had been insane heretofore? or would he seek refuge

in the comprehensive truth that it is "a mad world, my masters"?

So little do we know ourselves that when we begin a train of thought we never have any idea of where we shall end. Thus a sentence of Shelley's about sympathy and imagination has led to a series of reflections tending toward the doctrine that the conviction of personality is not a so-called "Necessary Truth," intuitive, axiomatic, above and inaccessible to logic, anterior to experience; that it is not simple but compound; and that a more extended and subtle analysis may reduce it to the rank into which the analysis of Hume reduced the idea of causation, the analysis of Berkeley the belief in the independent exterior existence of matter, the analysis of Kant the belief in the universal existence of space and time.

> We are such stuff
> As dreams are made of, and our little life
> Is rounded with a sleep.

LIBERTY AND NECESSITY.

May 1866.

—o—

"Others apart sat on a hill retired
In thoughts more elevate, and reasoned high
Of providence, foreknowledge, will and fate,
Fixed fate, free will, foreknowledge absolute,
And found no end, in wandering mazes lost."
—*Paradise Lost*, Book II.

It is noteworthy, but I do not remember that any one of the many who have cited these verses has remarked the fact, that while these philosophic devils found no end (although they were rather clever fellows), Milton thought that he had found an end himself; and made Raphael and even God Almighty (Books V. and III.) the mouthpieces of his conclusion. But I fear that the readers of the *National Reformer* will not fare better than the devils. Perhaps, however, the mind gets some wholesome exercise by being occasionally lost in wandering mazes, though such excursions always end at their starting-point, and though it is not desirable that the occasions should be frequent.

In the present discussion, as in most others of the kind which I have heard or read, it appears to me that the Necessitarian (whom we will call N.) has had decidedly the better of the argument over the Libertarian (whom we will call L.). But I cannot help suspecting that N. has owed

this advantage, if not altogether yet in very large measure, to the fact that he has confined himself to the fortification and defence of a single redoubt, and that L. has had the complaisance to confine himself to attempts to storm said redoubt in front. Hence the questions arise: first, whether this fortification really covers the whole field in dispute; and secondly, supposing it does not, whether L. could not do better by taking possession of the remainder of the battle-ground, either leaving N. shut up within his own parapets or starving him out.

Let us suppose a discussion of the ordinary kind to have taken place: L. has very gallantly come up to attack N. on the very spot, and in the very manner in which N. would choose to be attacked; the fortress has proved impregnable to the storming parties; L. has retired beaten, and dispirited. He now resolves to abandon the direct attack, and to try the effects of a blockade. The following seem to me about the best and strongest positions L. could take up. Whether they are so strong and well-placed as to starve N. into terms of surrender or compromise; whether N., in spite of them, could provision himself and remain impregnable; or whether he could assault and capture them, and become master of the whole field, your readers experienced in the controversy may decide.

L. says—(1.) Your necessity which is non-moral, which abolishes moral responsibility, is also (though you scarcely seem aware of this fact) non-intellectual, abolishes intellectual certainty. Necessity has no morality and no intelligence. Our contradictory opinions, mine the result of the organisation of circumstances called *Me*, yours the result of the organisation of circumstances called *You*, are equally products of necessity, equally necessitated: therefore, the one is as deeply founded and valid as the other. You

naturally and necessarily prefer yours, I naturally and necessarily prefer mine; each is relatively true, that is to say, the genuine outcome of its own organisation. But what possible standard of absolute truth can you allege whereby an impartial judge could authoritatively prefer one to the other? what presumption can either of us appeal to in favour of the claim that his opinion, which is personally true (*i.e.*, real), is true in the abstract and universally? Two contradictories, each based on eternal necessity, front each other; each is primordial, for the law and substance of the world from the very beginning are involved in each present organisation; each is invincible, for it is a fact: the conflict can never be philosophically decided, for philosophy has no standard by which to decide. Logic traces non-logic to necessity; and thus tracing it, is compelled to endow it with prerogatives as absolute as those which logic claims for itself, and thus virtually abdicates in favour of the anarchy of everlasting incertitude.

Such is the metaphysical antinomy in which your victory culminates. Practically, you seem to escape from it by certain paths of common-sense, whose right of way I may yet dispute with you. But your Necessitarianism is absolute and metaphysical in its claims; you are, therefore, bound to solve the metaphysical problem, reconcile the antinomy, transform the surd into a rational quantity; or to acknowledge that the metaphysical claims of your system are null; that, in fact, you do not possess an exact philosophy, but only an empirical instrument more or less useful, and less or more inaccurate.

But (2.) I must complain that even as ordinary "Christians" are continually playing fast and loose with faith and common-sense, so are you with absolute logic and empiricism. Were you arguing as to the necessary existence of God, you would triumphantly apply Hume's Analysis

of Causation; arguing as to the existence of Free Will, you find it comfortable wholly to ignore that analysis, manning your battlements with an imposing array of the corpses of syllogisms which that analysis slew, manœuvring as if on firm ground in country which that analysis flooded a hundred fathoms deep. Hume (anticipated by Berkeley and others) has consummately demonstrated, by a logic which is in the same plane as that wherein your chief arguments move, that we have no experience of causation, that we perceive only sequence of events, that (so far as we know) there never is necessity in the sequence of any two events, that we never can be entitled to assert that the former is the efficient cause of the latter, or that the former has the power to produce the latter; in brief, that the words *must* and *necessity*, as applied to any of the phenomena of the universe, have for us no philosophic validity. If this logic cannot be resisted in its own sphere; if in this same sphere is situated the realm which Necessitarianism claims for its empire; if, as a matter of fact, every cultivated N. has read and confirmed the verdict of Hume; how inconsistent (how astonishingly inconsistent, were not human inconsistency so universal that it has ceased to astonish) are you when importing *necessity* into the connexion between the events of human determination and precedent events, between motives and volitions.

Note that your favourite assertion, that the stronger motive always prevails, moves in a vicious circle like a squirrel in its cage: why does this motive prevail? because it is stronger; why is it stronger? because it prevails: it is stronger because it prevails, it prevails because it is stronger.

The result so far philosophically is exactly *zero*: I, L., am no more victorious than you, N.; we have arrived only at the dead-lock of an antinomy; our logic has demon-

strated only the utter impuissance of logic, impuissance which disables, of course, the logic of the demonstration,—as Hume saw and stated with perfect clearness.

But if you surrender the absolute claims of your system, admit that it is not a philosophy, and assert for it only the humble merits of a useful empiricism, do not forget that we are now in quite a different sphere.

Your arguments will be somewhat to the following effect: —"Practically, we observe that certain events are always followed by certain others, though we cannot prove any necessity in the sequence; practically, we observe that such and such results accrue from certain connexions between circumstances and organisation: with improvement of the circumstances, we find improvement of the organisation;" &c., &c. This, one must admit, is good common-sense as to its claims and objects; Christian missions and Secular propaganda alike start from it: whether the innumerable facts of the world do or do not, on the whole, bear it out, is a question for the humble collector of facts to gather materials for deciding. But as an instrument of good, it is very inaccurate, very weak, very easily disordered, very hard to use well; the facts are innumerable, the relations between them so complex and mysterious, each obvious improvement develops so much latent deterioration. Still, as the Sociology of Positivism, it is well-meaning and well worthy of earnest study.

(3.) But now that we are in the practical sphere, I, L., in my turn, assert that, practically, you believe in Free Will as thoroughly as I do; for the actual conduct of life is the precise measure of practical belief. A man's life is his organised belief; that which is not assimilated and organised into life, but left in the raw unnourishing state of mere logic and dialectic, being practically no belief at all. Just as truly as Christendom has no living faith in Christianity,

Necessitarians have no living faith in Necessitarianism. A religion is not a dogma (or series of dogmas); it is the product of two factors, the dogma and human nature: every N. sees this clearly and scourges the fine pretensions of religionists with the lash, "By their fruits ye shall know them." Just so, an ethical system is not a maxim (or series of maxims); it is the product of two factors, the maxim and human nature: and your Necessitarianism is cruelly scourged with the lash, "By their fruits ye shall know them." For life is the supreme fact; not any theory, creed, system, philosophy, or (in general) strait-waistcoat for life. And understand clearly that a system of religion or philosophy or ethics, fails just as thoroughly by being what you think too high, as by being what you think too low for actual human nature: my coat is a misfit if too large as if too small, though the too large has the advantage that it may be cut down or taken in to fit. Systems, unfortunately, always misfit by being too small.

Will you please to point me out a single N. who, for a single day of active life, has lived a Necessitarian; not irritated with the negligent servant, not indignant against the man who cheats him, not angry with the man who libels him, not grateful to the friend who helps him, &c., &c. When you can point me out one such, I may begin to think that, practically, your system is worth a moment's notice.

The *National Reformer* is read and written by persons of whom probably a larger proportion are Necessitarians than the readers and writers of any other periodical in England. Why these fierce attacks on the hypocrisy of the clergy, the selfishness of the aristocracy, the unfairness of Christian advocates, and so forth? Are they not necessary results of circumstance, if Necessitarianism means anything? Has the king any more moral responsibility for his tyranny than the peasant for his ignorance? Is it philosophical to vitu-

perate necessity? Does any philosopher call the lightning a heartless devastator, the storm a ferocious murderer, the plague an atrocious poisoner, the tiger a bloodthirsty bandit, the ass a culpably stupid brute, the fox a base villain? Yet the lectures and writings of Necessitarians are, at least, as fierce and violent in denunciation of immorality (while there is no moral responsibility), at least as fervent in praise of morality (while there is no moral merit) as the sermons and writings of Libertarians. You, Necessitarian, must begin your reform in language by expurgating from the dictionary all words implying moral praise and blame. The pretence that you use them as affording stronger motives for good, is utterly unphilosophical; implies that you consciously delude the weak-minded; implies also, that you, the slave of necessity, can choose or exercise free-will; and implies also the gross contradiction that Necessitarianism, which abolishes moral responsibility, can retain a moral standard.

It is so seldom, except in special discussion, that one sees even a sentence written by any N. as if he believed his own doctrine, that the following written by John Ashburner, M.D., in the preface to his translation of Reichenbach, is well worth quoting. Dr. Ashburner is, or was, an exceedingly able man; mark the ludicrous effect of his attempt at consistent words:—"No one can entertain a deeper veneration for large cerebral organisations than I do." Venerate a large cerebral organisation! What an object for reverence! Why not venerate a large visceral, renal, caudal, or any other organisation, as much as the cerebral?

A WALK ABROAD.

(A RELATION OF THINGS HEARD AND SEEN.)

1866.

—o—

It was the night of Saint Sylvester. I had been spending some golden hours with a friend philosophic and genial, drinking punch of a certain Irish whisky many years in the sherry-wood, a whisky that makes Fenianism preposterous, and the wrongs of Ireland incomprehensible; except, indeed, the brutal Sassenachs drink so much of it that the natives cannot get a fair share. In the words of the rhymer,

> It is amber as the western skies
> When the sunset glows serenest;
> It is mellow as the mild moonrise
> When the shamrock-leaves fold greenest.

With this we had been smoking a certain tobacco, tobacco of before the American War, "a weed of glorious feature," golden-leaved, honey-dew Virginian; surely the very weed whereof the sage Spenser sagely sang,

> And whether it divine tobacco were,
> Or panacea, or polygony—

Of this my friend had given me half a dozen noble cakes,

each about a quarter of a pound, as I left him with "Peace be upon this house!" and verily if he that giveth a cup of cold water to one of the little ones shall not go without his reward, can any reward be rich enough for him who to one of the little ones giveth, not a cup of cold water, but several glasses of hot punch, and thereto much tobacco exquisite as hasheesh ?.

The night was clear, still, and cold; the freshness of the air was delicious, and I resolved to take a ramble before going home. In my elevated spiritualised condition I managed quite easily and naturally to stray off this little earth of ours; and finding that the gas lamps of London had disappeared, I was attracted by those other lights, the "street lamps of the City of God." I may note for the benefit of any future wayfarers who take the same route, that the clouds are apt to put out one's pipe, and that a full flask in the pocket is desirable as medicine against their dampness; but when one has passed through the low cloud-strata and the few miles of earth-atmosphere, he enters into an æther wonderfully calm, pure, and exhilarating, wherein the pipe burns clearly yet not too quickly, and the respiration in itself is better than drinking from any flask. The following are my brief notes of what I saw and heard at the spots where I paused in my ramblings.

A wide marshy moor, black scarred with yellow and brown. The time seemed afternoon. No sun was visible, it was raining heavily; cobweb clouds were brushing fast over the dirty white-washed ceiling of sky. Across the moor lay a canal all livid from the long and violent lashing of the rain. A dingy barge came creeping down, drawn by the skeleton of Apocalyptic Death's white horse; and at the tiller of the barge sat a thin young man in shabby-genteel black frock-coat and other gear such as decent men wear in cities, on his head an old-fashioned cylindrical hat!—

Ho! gallant sailor, what country is this?—This is *Mercury*, my lord. Could your lordship vouchsafe me a pipe of tobacco and a couple of lights?—Most assuredly, your grace. Rather dull, eh?—Dull! I got this position by special favour. This is the best boat, the fastest horse, on the canal. We are all very honest and poor here, my lord; and the most of us are somewhat sluggish and dreamy. But I am of daring and adventurous spirit; I rejoice in this rapid motion, I love the swift variations of the landscape, I have even a stern pleasure in confronting the perils of the locks! My mother and father weep for me, but the heroic impulse drives me on.—What cargo?—Only ballast this return trip; the barge that follows me has a freight of wood in barter for the freight of peat I delivered, and will take back my ballast when it returns to its own place.—Truly an admirable arrangement, my friend! yet with so much skill and enterprise you are not wealthy?—Oh, I am better off than most, your worship; we are a poor people, very poor, but at any rate we are all honest and truthful.—I gave him a piece of tobacco, and having several silver coins in my pocket (a fact far more astounding than my presence in *Mercury*), I gave him eke half-a-crown. He was calling down the most beautiful benedictions upon my head as I strolled away.

I next came to a rocky realm dim in twilight, where was heard all around and about a tumult as of the rushing and roaring of seas. I discerned a large number of lean little fellows all very busily employed, dressed in ragged quaker costume; but that sleekness of sensual spiritualism well-to-do in the world, which is the common expression of quakers in our time, was absent from these faces, and in its stead gaunt earnestness. They were ploughing the rocky ground with painful industry, the men tugging, the women driving; their ploughs were rough broken branches, the shares were rude blades awkwardly attached with strips of bark. From

my inmost soul I compassionated them.—O man of red *Mars*, do you reap fat harvests from these fields?—Alack, no, your honour; we are sore beset with famine, yet this is one of our richest districts. Fortunately we are a tranquil folk, and when we can't get food, just lie down and perish placidly.—Will you have some tobacco, my friend?—We account it wicked to smoke, sire; but if your majesty could spare a few pence to buy a poor man a little bread?—I gave him a half-a-crown, and went off feeling less jolly.

I next called at an immense village of miserable huts and hovels, a village in four-mooned *Jupiter*. I saw great gaps of charred ruins where fire had raged, and saw many of the hovels marked with great red crosses; all about me was very still. Then a murmur and a rattling came, and I saw a large body of tall men, very gaunt and livid, with a number of low donkey-trucks. The men entered the hovels that bore the stigma, and emerged carrying corpses more livid than themselves, dark blue corpses of the plague-smitten; and side by side on each donkey-truck stretched a pair, and went on toward some burial-pit. I spoke to the last of them. How many has the plague killed, my poor friend? —Nearly one in six already, my lord; and it is to be hoped that it will kill at least half of us, for better to die quickly of pest than slowly of hunger.—I am burning a sacred incense of disinfection: will you have some? He went down on his knees in reverential rapture.—Most gracious Sovereign, I will give it to my wife that she may bury me!—I gave him some tobacco and half-a-crown, and went away feeling still less jolly.

I then arrived at *Saturn*, of whose belts and moons I shall say nothing, in mercy to the astronomers: why should they be deprived of the dear pleasure of speculating and guessing a few centuries more? I came plumb upon a

channel of the sea, wherein I might have been drowned had not the natural antipathy of good whisky to overmuch water kept the very soles of my feet unwet. I saw two ranks of large rough boats, in each of which was one enormous naked man, in each of whom was one enormous eye. They were engaged in barter, the one set having things edible in wicker baskets, the other set things drinkable in gourds. They all looked very healthy, very strong, thoroughly good-tempered and perfectly stupid. I held up half-a-crown and asked who would have it; every big eye regarded me with cunning senile disdain. I held up a piece of tobacco and asked who would have it; big noses came surging against my hand and snored with deep delight, then the creatures all roared together like good-natured thunder, Me, me, me! So I organised a race for it on the sublime principles of true donkey racing; every one to shift into another's boat, and the owner (not the paddler) of the last boat to win. After about an hour of eloquent and lucid exposition, I succeeded in persuading them that they comprehended the plan. Then I cried Start! but not one moved; every one was watching his own boat to make sure that it did not get ahead, and feeling very triumphant as he saw that it did not even stir. About another hour of demonstration, exhortation, execration, winding up with a modest but very effective threat to thwack them all round if they did not row as hard as ever they could; then I cried Start again. Row hard they did, and every one dashed to cannon against his own boat in order to put it out of the running and thus secure its victory. The result was a general smash and upset; and they all swam about grinning and snorting and shouting, every one claiming "the nice stuff to flavour sweet drink." I placed the piece on the round back of the nearest boat; a grand scrambling swimming match ensued; and I departed feeling much more jolly.

I next stopped at *Uranus*, which was almost termed Georgium Sidus: the poor Olympians must lament the lost honour of a Guelph King of England among them! *Moi, je l'aurais plutôt nommé Pluton*, a friend suggests, seeing that it is associated with Saturn, and Jupiter, and Neptune; but my profound knowledge of science and its history enables me to inform him sternly that Neptune was not born or even thought of in the astronomic womb, when the big last baby Uranus needed christening. I found myself in a realm like the China pictured on porcelain, whereof the poet saith, "In this realm nature and man cannot look each other in the face without laughing. They do not laugh out loud, both are too polished and civilised, but holding-in the laugh they make the queerest grimaces. There one finds neither shadow nor perspective; and upon the houses of a thousand colours rise one above the other roofs, stretched like umbrellas, hung with bells of jingling metal, so that the very wind produces a comical noise and becomes ridiculous in passing over this land." I saw quaint little men whose pigtail knobs kept bobbing on the ground behind them; I saw quaint little women moving in jerky pitter-patter as puppets move, their oblique eyes flush with the face. All looked withered and poor, yet all were solemnly grimacing. Peeping under verandahs I saw families at dinner, supping messes in which floated snails and beetles and cockroaches, picking daintily the bones (which they afterwards crunched like barley-sugar) of "rats and mice and such small deer." The populace themselves swarmed like cockroaches, and their talk was in quick mouselike squeaks. On the table of one family I put half-a-crown and a piece of tobacco; the patriarch extemporised an astonishingly eloquent oration of the most panegyrical character in squeaks now staccato and now slurred by twenties; a wrinkled child cried with rapture, "We'll have a

big dog for dinner to-morrow!" and the whole family fell down and worshipped me as I departed.

And then I came to *Neptune*, and saw a vast stretch of brown land heaved up into a cirque of large molehills around a dull lake. Very rough draughts of fair humanity, both male and female, were swimming and diving in the water like so many otters, then came waddling up the shore with fish in their mouths, and burrowed hastily, for the large molehills were their dens. They seemed a very stupid race, with the mind in a permanent state of hibernation; but very soft and mild except to the poor fish. They seemed, too, always hungry, for scarcely had they disappeared into their dens than they emerged again for more fishing. I tendered one of them half-a-crown. He took it as if it were a thing of course, and gazed on it long with stolid attention in his protuberant goggle eyes; at length dawned a certain gleam of thought; he wrapped the coin in a piece of fish-skin, and hung it round his neck, doubtless as a talisman or sacred charm, for he showed pride and exultation. I gave another a bit of tobacco; he threw it at once into his mouth and swallowed it with very little chewing, I hope without bad results. I went away bemused, and hurried homewards.

But I did not like to return without calling at *Venus*. There I found myself in a large, silent city, full of tall gloomy buildings like convents or barracks, all enclosed by high blank walls. I saw a long procession of macerated old virgins, shrouded somewhat like sisters of mercy, defiling through the wicket in the gates into one of these convents. How plain, not to say hideous, the poor creatures were! They were all muttering in unmusical dolorous monotony a litany for deliverance from the world, the flesh, and the devil: their world they might well wish to be delivered from, the flesh they were almost delivered from already, and the devil

is too busy with the pretty girls to meddle with such withered old maidens. The dark serge cloaks in which they were muffled had each a hood or head-bag hanging behind. Into that of the last I dropt half-a-crown and a piece of tobacco, and whispered, Where are the men?—The men, O bold stranger, are in their own city on the other side of the river. —Why don't you mingle with them?—Can it be that you know not we are Malthusians? It was found that we were outgrowing the food of our world. Only one-half our people are permitted to marry, and but one child is permitted to each family; such families, however, as are childless may give or sell their right of production to others, and we have heard of one terrible pair who have used up a large fortune in purchasing the privilege of having twenty-three children besides their first.—I departed in a state of mind not to be described.

My last visit I paid to the *Moon*, not to the side of it turned toward us, for I have ever felt a remarkable interest in the other which we never see. It happened to be deep night there, and I saw many people squatted around fires of forest wood, while others were continually coming in with fresh fuel. The teeth were chattering, the bodies cowering, and the catlike eyes glared green phosphorescence in the darkness. A careworn man, bilious and nervous, an ardent mind in a frozen body, took me aside mysteriously and descanted on the wretched condition of himself and his compatriots. He said that the forests were nearly used up, that brushwood was getting scarce, that they had frightful alternations of intense cold and intense heat, that they were always half-starved. But the moral injustice of their doom was what hurt them most. Was it fair that one side of the moon should be always turned away from the earth, and the other always turned toward it? He had heard that a benevolent earth-lord wanted to give both sides turn and turn, but the

other astronomical earth-lords wouldn't agree. Would I present his petition and advocate his claims of justice and equality? Look at the monstrous monopolies of the other side! It is to the earth as the whole moon, it is honoured with beautiful names, and sacred to the proudest goddesses; it enjoys an immense revenue of odes and sonnets and songs, has a magnificent royalty in all eloquence of similes and metaphors, a tender interest and delicious part in all love-affairs.—I was afflicted by his complaint, and promised to use my great influence on the right side.—Truly unjust is your treatment, O other-side-of-the-moon-man, I said; and I have noticed many other cases of injustice in my visits during this night, for I am not an official inspector. What inequalities in the distances of the planets from the sun, and by consequence in their orbits and periods of revolution; what flagrant inequalities of size and mass among them; what an unequal distribution of moons throughout the solar system! What right has Saturn to his monopoly of the belts? Why are the stars so irregularly scattered in space? Even on our earth, which is your mother-country, we suffer similar wrongs. Heat and light, palm-trees and elephants, whales and walrusses, mountains and rivers, islands and lakes, land and water, white and black and tawny complexions, and many other things, are most unequally distributed throughout it; its very axis is iniquitously oblique. And even among ourselves, among us the earth-lords, the same lawless law obtains. Large limbs and broad backs, aquiline noses and brilliant eyes, clear brains and warm hearts, are shamefully confined to a few. But cheer up, let us both cheer up, O other-side-of-the-moon-man, this state of things cannot last much longer. For we have now societies numerous and powerful for the extinction of all wrongs, real and imaginary: Missionary Societies, Bible Societies, Religious Tract Societies; Societies for the Pro-

rogation of the Gospel, the Confusion of Useful Knowledge, the Perversion of the Jews; a Temperance League, a Reform League, a National Secular Society, an International Society: and the least of these stupendous and glorious associations intends to accomplish things much more difficult than this slight alteration in your mode of revolution which you have done me the honour to put under my especial patronage. Courage, then, my friend. Here is half-a-crown, and there is a piece of tobacco; employ yourself in getting up a monster petition, and don't let any one sign it more than twenty times, and if you can keep the fictitious names in the minority do so. Couldn't you make a demonstration from our side of the moon? A sudden irruption might put it in your possession for one night? Let your cry be, Jellinger Symons to the rescue!—So I departed fervent with lofty zeal, as he pronounced me Lord of the Lord-earth most enlightened and illustrious!

I found myself in London, not far from my habitation. It was considerably past midnight. We were in the new year. A poor woman offered me a box of matches; as I didn't want any, she begged a penny, which I gave. A girl well dressed asked for sixpence or a drop of gin, as she was perished with cold, &c. I gave her sixpence, but told her that in my humble opinion such hours and habits were scarcely conducive to health and morality. A whining man asked for twopence to get a bed, and a penny to get a roll; I gave him threepence. A ragged boy, thin-faced and large-eyed, asked for twopence to get some coffee and toke; I gave the twopence. A cabby asked me to get in; I gave him a polite refusal.

When I got home I fell into a fit of profound and melancholy musing over my pipe and a glass of grog. I found that I had but four shillings and tenpence and a cake of the tobacco left. How veritable, I thought, are the words

of the great poet (is it Shakespeare or Mr. Tupper, is it Shelley or Dr. Isaac Watts?)

> Whene'er I take my walks abroad
> How many poor I see!

But never before in my walks abroad did I see so many poor as I have seen in my walk abroad to-night. Indigence everywhere, and I have nearly emptied my pockets without relieving the millionth part of a millionth part of it. When all the planets hold out their hands in beggary, what can a man do with a pound and a quarter of tobacco and about as much in loose silver? And then our poor old earth! Cattle disease, cholera, Overend and Gurney, flourishing banks through which flowed rivers of wealth, the London, Chatham, and Dover, Austria, the Pope, the dear little German Kingikins, Turkey, the Reform Bill, and the Liberal Ministry! The solar system is clearly insolvent, and I suppose the rest of the universe is in like case. I shouldn't wonder if it turns out that the sun has been blazing away out of his capital for the last few hundred years. Is the end of the world really at hand? The only resource I can think of is that the great private firm which owns and works it should sell the whole concern at about three times its value, and the goodwill for about double what it would be worth were the business immensely profitable; and dissolve into a Limited Liability Company. And I do not know that they could get a more active and able managing director than their old rival Satan. He is the fellow to keep its shares from falling into the "realms of gloomy Dis.," for he always keeps himself out of them in spite of doom and predestination, and goes up and down on the earth like a roaring Joint Stock Company seeking whom he may devour. And his interest in the world is so much larger than any one else's, that he would do his best to keep it going. Anyhow,

something decisive must be done, and that very soon. And I fell asleep into wild dreams, murmuring those words of the illustrious poet (*is* it Shelley or Mr. Tupper, *is* it Shakespeare or Dr. Isaac Watts?)

> Whene'er I take my walks abroad
> How many poor I see!

THE FAIR OF ST. SYLVESTER.*

December 1875.

—o—

It was the last evening of the year, and I was alone in my room. The curtains were drawn, the fire was burning brightly, I had just taken my tea, and was having the delicious after-smoke; for no smoke is more delicious than that immediately following tea, when one's mind is lucid and active again after the afternoon sluggishness, with a long evening before it for intellectual enjoyment, whether of reading or writing or simple meditation. On this occasion I had purposed to do some writing; but I felt so warm and cosy and nobly indolent, leaning back in the easy-chair, with my feet towards the fire on another chair, and gazing with half-shut eyes into the ruddy glow and dancing flames, that, when the one pipe was finished, and by previous covenant with myself I was bound to set to work, I calmly refilled the beloved pipe and set myself to deliberate enjoyment thereof, while my mind was borne slowly hither and thither through the serene twilight of remembrance and reverie. For the milestones of life are for each of us so few, and its miles, which are years, to each of us so long, that when we have travelled yet another, and find ourselves at the term

* Reprinted, with consent of the proprietors, from *Cope's Tobacco Plant*, January 1876.

which marks a new departure, we can scarcely refrain from pausing to look back on all we have passed, and reflect on the strange things that have occurred in them, and dream of what the future may bring forth. Sad I was not, too tranquil for sadness; yet not untender were the memories, nor quite void of yearning the dreams. For the old friends came back who have sunk to rest for ever; and the old familiar places perhaps never to be seen again, certainly never to be seen again the same as they were seen of yore; and the old thoughts and desires, now strange as the thoughts and desires of an alien; and the old actions which cannot be undone, which it boots not to repent or regret, since the gods themselves have no power upon the past. Nay, whatever be the present (which is infinitesimal), and whatever be the future (which to us is indefinite); the past, the sure past, whose records are written eternal and immutable in the book of destiny, even were its character, when present, dark and terrible and abominable, gleams ever serene and sacred in the moonlit dusk of memory, whose very tears are shining stars: it is dear and holy with the dearest holiness of the dead.

And while I thus thought and dreamed on the confines of trance and sleeping and waking, for the red fire made me vaguely drowsy, so that I barely kept my good pipe burning, I was suddenly stirred by a light tap on my shoulder and the sweetest of voices in my ear: "Ah, lazy one! must I always find you smoking and dreaming?" I cannot say that I was surprised, though the tap and the voice and the waft of chill air had caught me without my hearing footstep or opening of the door; for I knew well at once who was the most welcome intruder, seeing that she had thus visited me, unexpected and unannounced, many a time before. But inasmuch as she rarely comes twice in exactly the same guise, I did, for a luxurious moment ere lifting my eyes,

indulge in wonder how she would appear to me then. In that moment she took the pipe from my hand and mouth, giving me a kiss in generous compensation, and shook me from my drowsy repose with a sprinkle of coldest thaw-drops on my indolent warmth. I stood abashed yet delighted to greet her, the beautiful, the ever-young, who is so gracious and loving when it pleases her to visit me, who is so capricious and cruel in keeping away altogether for weeks and months, however sorely I need and earnestly supplicate her presence. Eyes could not open upon vision more joyous and charming. Mantled in rich green, with linings and borders of ermine, through which shone a red skirt and white furry boots wherein petulant little feet nestled, she was bright as berried holly half-muffled in snow. And from the hood of her mantle, bordered also with ermine, shone out a lovely and riant face; the cheeks glowing, and the tips of the fairy ears glowing redder yet, as if translucent with fire within; the abundant brown curls escaping everywhere, the wantons; the brown eyes glittering with ineffable lights and darks; while her fresh breath panted out, visible in the frosty atmosphere she had brought with her. From head to foot she was pulsing and dancing with swift buoyant life. "So!" she exclaimed, with scorn curling in nostrils and lips, and mischief laughing in her eyes; "this is what you think manly enjoyment; dozing like an old cat by the fire; and dreaming like a decrepit grandfather of the days that are no more! As for your smoking, I have nothing to say against that; but the incense would be far more fresh and fragrant in the healthy open air. Oh, I am stifled here! Quick, sir; you must come with me, and I'll show you something better than this half-alive sluggishness." I answered sheepishly, yet fervently enough: "Dearest Lady, I would come with *you* were it to a pious tea-meeting; my chief prayer is that I might be always with you, or, if so

you prefer it, that you might be always with me."—"Tut, child!" said my impatient visitor, and pushed me out of the room.

In an instant we were down in the open air. There attended us a sleigh, curved like a sea-shell for grace, poised like a butterfly for lightness, heaped with thick skins barred and starred, the robes of the hot fierce life of the tropics to envelop us in the frigid north; with two small fleet horses, full of fire, whose champing kept their multitude of bells in continual silver chime. Mounting, we sank and muffled ourselves in the furs; my Lady took the reins, and we sped away ringing through the night. I have not the least notion where we went, and cheerfully bear witness to the truth that a man never proceeds so well as when he knows not whither he is going; I can but tell something of what I saw, hoping that, from my indications, the Royal Geographical Society will be able to identify both our route and our goal. At first I shrank chilled, but soon my blood began to glow and dance with the excitement of our swift career, and the rapture of being thus borne away side by side with her. Erelong I found that we were racing down the broad clear aisle of a pine-forest, the firm snow crunching under us, and the keen stars racing with us over the back-rushing trees, whose snows freely powdered us as we passed. Nor were we alone. To right and left, behind and before, sleigh-bells were merrily ringing, down all the parallel glades these cars of the snow were gliding; we outstripped hundreds on either hand, we outstripped scores on our own pathway: none could keep up with us, so gallantly we flew. Coming to the broad arm of a lake, we skimmed across it, one of many; and the stars, which had been flying with us, glimpsed through the vanishing hair of the pine-trees, now fell back from us; rolled rearward with their deep blue immensity of sky. Then again we ran among the pines, all resonant with

bells as other woods are resonant with birds in June; and sweetlier resonant with clear young voices and laughters, so that never were woods so vocal even in leafy June.

We had thus careered for I know not how long, when a great glow and space opened before us; and the stars paled and the hollow sky darkened over this ruddy earth-glow. Nearing it, I grew aware of multitudinous life and movement, whose voices were blent into a multitudinous murmur, as of the sea; and scarcely had I remarked this when we were on the border of this living lake, into which all the sleighs streamed down their forest glades. "Out!" said my Lady; "we are going to stroll through this Fair of St. Sylvester." We were at the door of a sort of booth-stable, into which she led the panting and steaming horses, and left them, with the sleigh, to the care of an ostler who looked as if he had been expecting her arrival. Then she took my arm, and we turned towards the centre of the space. All was brilliance and noise and undisorderly confusion. So bright was the lustre of the innumerable lamps and lanterns, that although the trees all around the clearing had lost their snow, their dark-green looked as white as the whiteness of their snow-muffled brethren beyond. Booths overflowing with all the toys and trinkets of Yule-tide, as well as all imaginable rich and gaudy wares, made every path a street; and every such street was crowded with happy people—strolling, chatting, laughing, singing, inspecting, bargaining—from almost every nation under heaven, as it seemed to me. Picturesque national costumes abounded, bright with the positive colours loved by all who are not civilised into timid tameness. Masks and disguises were many and various; but I am bound to say that I did not see a single personage disguised as a respectable Englishman in evening dress and crush hat, or as a respectable Englishwoman in fashionable array of either morning or evening: it would

seem that the wildest phantasy of these revellers could not reach the wild extravagance of such travesties. A few of our soldiers and sailors I saw; and a few merry fellows got up as lawyers with gowns and wigs, as freemasons with all the paraphernalia, and as flunkeys gorgeous in powder and plush; all of whom caused immense fun wherever they appeared. Many of the booths were devoted, not to merchandise, but to refreshments and music and dancing. Looking beyond the bars of these, you saw (or, rather, *I* saw, reader, whom I pity for not being there) the people of all the countries dancing their own dances to their own music. Such a shuffling and leaping and winding and whirling, with snapping of fingers and wild sharp cries! such a strumming and droning and shrilling and booming and blaring!—each such booth was as a bewildering kaleidoscope twirled rapidly in gusts of stormy sound. And there was singing almost as frequent as the dancing. Oh, the wild popular airs of the dances and the songs! Airs reminiscent of the roaring of torrents and the weird wind-shrieks of mountain gorges; airs born from the melancholy solitude of wide Campagna plains; airs attuned to the voices of the pine-forests; airs inspired by the voices of the illimitable sea. And, oh, the wild popular words of the songs! Music and words abrupt and uncouth; but profoundly sincere and heartfelt in their passion, their tenderness, and their wayward humours of mirth.

So we strolled and lingered along, with many digressions, into the side-lanes, looking little at the baubles and wares, much at the people, until we drew near to the centre of the fair, where we found, islanded in a circle of dark quietude, a huge double image, either a Janus bifrons or two figures seated back to back; for the forms were as carved in high relief out of the rock obelisk which rose between them. First, fronting eastward down the main avenue by which we

had approached, a great calm Oriental figure serenely smoking an enormous pipe, the clouds from its lips flowing forth grey and dim against the surrounding light. "He burns anything and everything in that pipe of his," said my Lady in a soft voice; "nothing comes amiss to him, he finds all of good odour and sweet savour; the fashions of the day and the follies of the years, books and music, pictures and statues, stout ships and strong towers, empires and religions, races and species, rivers and mountains, with the grass and flowers of the field, planets and systems themselves, all sooner or later are consumed in that Pipe-Bowl and vanish in those dim wreaths, the smoke of the sacrifice of Change, the incense of the altar of Fate." Moving slowly round the rock, we saw the other figure fronting westward down the main avenue of the unvisited half of the fair; and it was a great serene child thoughtfully blowing bubbles from such another pipe, and they floated off large and splendid as luminous balloons against the surrounding light. And my Lady said quietly, "All that is puffed away in the smoke seems to reappear in the bubbles; not quite the same, yet so similar that only between far-distant ages can important variance be discerned." And, pondering, I murmured, "Oh! dear Lady, the bubbles seem as fleeting and unsubstantial as the smoke!" And she merely responded, "Is it even so?"

While we lingered about these figures I was startled by a sudden peremptory clangour of trumpets, and from the east a great sad voice cried, "The Old Year is dead!" whereto immediately, from the west, a great glad voice responded, "The Near Year is born!" And my Lady murmured, as in dream,

> For thus it is with every thing:
> The king is dead! Long live the king!

At the foot-stone of the supreme Smoker was gathered a

funeral procession: twelve hooded figures muffled in trailing black over sombre red, bearing a black-palled bier, preceded by trumpeters and followed by mourners, set forth marching slowly to the east, the mourners chanting a solemn dirge, whose notes were at intervals caught up by the trumpets and swelled and prolonged into rending clamours. And at the foot-stone of the supreme Blower of Bubbles was gathered a festal procession: twelve figures with floating white veils, white-robed over bright green, bearing a white-curtained litter, preceded by flutes and trumpets, and followed by revellers, set forth marching briskly to the west, the revellers chanting a joyous chant, whose notes the flutes shrilled and trilled bird-like, or the trumpets caught up and swelled with triumphant exultation. And as the funeral procession passed away down the eastern avenue the lights dwindled and were quenched, the music and the songs were hushed, and the people as in a panic poured hurrying along through the central still space to the other side; but as the festal procession passed away down the western avenue fresh lights kindled and flashed, fresh music and songs arose, revellers swarmed, and the fair was more gay and brilliant and noisy than before under the sailing bubbles; while he of the pipe, which is the alcahest-crucible, gazed unmoved, ever contentedly smoking, athwart a black gulph over the snow-laden ranked and serried pines.

And when I had watched and meditated all this from the central ring, my Lady said to me, "Come; we will visit the other half of the fair." And as we lingered among the booths, yet richer and more abounding as it seemed to me than those we had seen before, she said to me archly, "Have you any money in your pocket, O my poet, to buy me a fairing?" I must avow that I shuddered instinctively and glanced furtively around, terrified lest any of my countrymen or countrywomen had heard me addressed by

that opprobrious title; but fortunately none was near, and I could give myself freely to the delight of answering, "Really, by some rare miracle, I have. Never before would you, who give so much, suffer me to give you any smallest thing; what may I get you now?" And she said, "Nay, but you must choose it yourself; and if I care not for it, it is but a trinket of the fair; but if it pleases me, I will keep it long for your sake." Wherefore I lingered on with her, arm-in-arm, in anxious trepidation; and I prayed earnestly with my heart and brain, "O Delian and Delphic Apollo, inspire me, that I may choose aright, for of myself I have no skill, and it is thou who hast breathed into me the madness which makes me a poor witless poet!" But she, as to hearten and divert me, began calling my attention to the wares and gewgaws exposed for sale, remarking, "Since you are to buy me a fairing, it is but right that I should get one for you." And I said, "Wisest Lady, choose you then for me, as I must choose for you." But she answered, "Nay, this time you must choose for yourself also; another time I may choose for you again, even as I chose in bygone years the gift which you neglected." I knew not what precisely she meant; but I had a consciousness of folly and ingratitude, so that my heart was heavy, and my head sank, and my body drooped as failing beneath a burden. But she grew yet blither, and her smile and her speech were so enchanting that mortal sadness could not resist them; and soon I was again all delight in communion with her. Stopping at a very gorgeous show, she said, "Here is a crown of gold, whose jewels are fair provinces; would you like it?" And I answered, "I could not endure it, for even a tall hat gives me the headache." Then she said, "Here is a full-bottomed wig; will it not please you?" And I answered, "Have mercy upon me, dear Lady; I can never split as many hairs

as go to make it." Then she said, "Here is a mitre; surely you will snatch at *it?*" And I answered hastily, "Heaven forbid! From a forked hat and a forked tongue, good Lord, deliver us!" Many other things she offered me, with commendations sincere or feigned; rank and honours, power and authority, fame and notoriety, and many more; but for none of them was I willing that she should pay a farthing. At length she said, "Of all children, you are the most difficult to please; I shall never make anything of you, you will never reflect any credit on me. Poor you shall be always, and obscure, unvalued and without value; better had it been for me if, many years ago, I had taken interest in some one else." This bitter speech, in truth, was not very bitter to me, nor did I feel at all discouraged by it; and in a few paces I stopped decisively before a large booth, pungently fragrant with "divine Tobacco;" stored, as it appeared, with enough of the rich herb to feed for a twelvemonth even the abysmal insatiable pipe of that supreme Smoker, who can puff away kingdoms as we a box of Regalias, and with whom the exhalation of golden worlds is facile as with us the exhalation of golden honey-dew. In this booth of bounteousness were not only all good sorts of Tobacco, snuff, and cigars, but also all sorts of pipes; so that it is not wonderful that I stood still enraptured. And, after profoundest contemplation, I said, "Kindest Lady, if you will give me a good gift, give me the Pipe of Peace!" And she bought for me the Pipe of Peace, and therewith great store of the Tobacco of Content, such as is never found in earthly jars; and she said, "Now, you must be happy and good till I see you again; not troublesome and querulous, as I hear you have been of late." And I faithfully promised to try to be good and happy, as she ordained.

We reached the western border of the fair, and I took a

long last look at the joyous crowds weaving ever-shifting gay patterns under the innumerable lamps and flickering lights, and listened long to the sea-like murmur of its multitudinous speech and laughter and music and song. When I turned, there was our sleigh attending us; the horses fresh and impatient, arching their necks and jingling their bells. We darted away through the forest, now all still and silent around us, for we were alone. And while we flew down a broad glade, and the stars in the sky flew with us over the back-vanishing colonnades of the pines, black on the one hand with an iron gloom, white on the other with the driven snow, suddenly my Lady asked me, "But what have you bought me for a fairing, O my foolish poet, who for once had money in your purse?" Whereon I drew forth what I had bought when she really was, or appeared to be, observant otherwhere, and answered, "Only this;" and handed it to her. It was but a golden bracelet, a Serpent of Eternity, with carbuncle eyes, and a certain Name enamelled within. And she kissed me and was well pleased; so that I returned devout thanks for his inspiration to our heavenly father, the Delphic Apollo.

I know not how long we thus travelled, racing down interminable aisles of the forest; and at length I must have fallen asleep, nestling up to her side under the skins of the tropics; and slept long, dreaming all the while of snow-covered trees and starlit sky above, and hard snow beneath, and straight pillars as of black and white marble around, and the continuous silver ringing of bells, ringing ever with the tireless swift rushing of our horses. And so she must have led me, sleeping like a tired-out child whom the mother fears to waken, back into my room, and then left me with a kiss which I felt through my slumber, and whose sweetness is not gone now I wake. Waking I find the fire still faintly red, and all else as it was just after tea; but my

watch marks midnight over. And that the visit of my Lady and our travel and the fair were not a dream, I have proofs positive; for here on the table is the Pipe of Peace she gave me, together with the sweet Tobacco of Content, even such as is never found in earthly jars; while it is clear that I bought for her the bracelet, since of the money I had by a rare miracle in my pocket, there are but a few shillings left.

A NOTE ON FORSTER'S LIFE OF SWIFT.

May 1876.

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It is much to be regretted that Mr. Forster did not live to complete this work, which he meant to occupy three volumes; it is much to be desired that the materials he gathered during many years of preparation should be entrusted to some competent literary man, so that we may have a full and accurate biography not quite unworthy of the subject. As to this first volume, which is all that Mr. Forster accomplished, it merits the highest praise for its elaborate carefulness. We miss, indeed, the energy of the *Lives of the Statesmen of the Commonwealth*, and intense energy is demanded for the *Life of Swift;* we miss, also, some of the finer qualities that make the *Life of Oliver Goldsmith* such charming reading: the central figure and the central interest are here and there obscured by the multitude of subsidiary details; the contours are not always firm, nor the colours always clear; and we lament that the artist was not in a position to attempt this great picture in his prime, ere his hand grew somewhat tremulous, and his sight somewhat dim, and his natural strength was abated. But it is evident that what honest and earnest

labour could effect he has effected, sparing no trouble to master and state the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth; and this thoroughness of patient workmanship is so rare and precious in our current literature, that we might well for its sake condone far more serious deficiencies than we find here. With the work finished in the style of this volume, we should have, if not the classic Life of Swift, at any rate abundant and well-tested materials for such a Life, stored up and arranged with workmanlike skill and care. I must not omit to mention two things for which students will be grateful; a full index, and marginal notes of all the leading matters in the text.

In his Preface Mr. Forster states:—

"The rule of measuring what is knowable of a famous man by the inverse ratio of what has been said about him, is applicable to Swift in a marked degree. Few men who have been talked about so much are known so little. . . . Swift's later time, when he was governing Ireland as well as his deanery, and the world was filled with the fame of *Gulliver*, is broadly and intelligibly written. But as to all the rest, his life is a work unfinished, to which no one has brought the minute examination indispensably required, where the whole of a career has to be considered to get at the proper comprehension of single parts of it. The writers accepted as authorities for the obscurer portion are found to be practically worthless, and the defect is not supplied by the later and greater biographers. Johnson did him no kind of justice because of his too little liking for him; and Scott, with much hearty liking as well as a generous admiration, had too much other work to do. Thus, notwithstanding noble passages in both memoirs, and Scott's pervading tone of healthy, manly wisdom, it is left to an inferior hand to attempt to complete the tribute begun by those distinguished men."

Mr. Forster tells us that more than a hundred and fifty new letters had been placed at his disposal. He obtained additions to the fragment of autobiography first printed by Mr. Deane Swift; and questions raised by that autobiography in connexion with Swift's university career are settled by one of the Rolls of Trinity College which fell into his hands. "Two original letters written from Moor Park clear up that story of the Kilroot living which has been the theme of extravagant misstatement. Unpublished letters in the palace at Armagh . . . show clearly Swift's course as to questions which led to his separation from the Whigs." Mr. Forster also secured Swift's note books and books of account; a large number of unpublished pieces in prose and verse interchanged between himself and Sheridan; the copy of the Life by Hawkesworth enriched with MS. notes by Dr. Lyon, who had charge of Swift's person in his last illness; letters relating to *Gulliver*, some to Stopford, and some to Arbuthnot of peculiar value; an unpublished journal in Swift's handwriting, singular in its character, and of extraordinary interest, written on his way back to Dublin, amid grave anxiety for Esther Johnson (Stella), then dangerously ill; a copy of the first edition of *Gulliver*, interleaved for alterations and additions by the author, and containing several interesting passages, mostly in the Voyage to Laputa, which have never yet been given to the world; a copy of Swift's correspondence with his friend Knightley Chetwode during the seventeen years (1714–1731) which followed his appointment to the Deanery of St. Patrick's, "the richest addition to the correspondence of this most masterly of English letter-writers since it was first collected." To my mind the most interesting novelty in this first volume is contained in the Sixth Book (Appendix), under the heading of "Unprinted and Misprinted Journals"; being the restoration, by collation with the originals in the

British Museum, of the genuine and complete text of the first one and the last twenty-four of the letters which make up what is called the Journal to Stella. Here for the first time we read, just as they were written, the "little language" and the caressing diminutives and abbreviations Swift used with his darling; the delightful, fantastic, secret, childish, infinitely tender babblement, never weary of repeating itself, welling up amidst and around the records of the ruggedest affairs of State, like perennial springs of pure sweet water in a region of savage rocks. He was fighting Titanically a Titanic battle; and night and morning, in bed before he rose, in bed before he slept, he found refreshment and peace in these infantine outpourings of innocent love. The sternest cynics have such soft places in their heart of hearts! incomparably softer than the softness of unctuous sentimentalists; liquid with living fountains where these are boggy with ooze.

I have quoted Mr. Forster's very fair judgment on the biographies by Dr. Johnson and Sir Walter Scott. It must be added that of the two writers of most authority who have since dealt with the life and character of Swift, Macaulay does him even less justice than did Johnson, and Thackeray not much more. Both, and Thackeray in particular, were impressed by the supremacy of his genius; but both were essentially out of sympathy with the man. Thackeray, although vulgarly charged with cynicism, was less a cynic than a worldling of genius who had cynical moods. He had a great deal of genuine respect for the established, the customary, the common-place, and was altogether more ironical in tone than in fact when he classed himself among the Snobs he satirised so keenly, though he was certainly a very superior specimen of the class. One of the common threads interwoven with the finer and richer threads of his fabric, was a very soft

sentimental "religious" nerve connecting his heart and brain, and this was terribly shocked by Swift's daring and strenuous handling of the most formidable problems presented by our religions, our life, and our world. Moreover, Thackeray's thoroughly English domestic sentiments, his English worship of home and the ordinary public strict relations of husband and wife and family, were revolted by the mysterious duplex relations of Swift with Stella and Vanessa; relations, I may observe, whose full tragic development does not come within the scope of this volume, and which in their worst entanglement it does not appear that Mr. Forster could have done much to unravel.

Macaulay, historiographer in chief to the Whigs, and the great prophet of Whiggery which never had or will have a prophet, vehemently judged that a man who could pass over from the celestial Whigs to the infernal Tories must be a traitor false as Judas, an apostate black as the Devil. In truth, Swift was never an extrême partizan of either faction, and tried to moderate both; being Whiggish in his acceptance of the Revolution, and Toryish in his Church views. However, Macaulay, who has always exquisite pleasure and conscientious satisfaction in showing that our great writers who were not steadfast Whigs were just as ignoble morally as they were noble intellectually, paints him in the most lurid colours, and gives us a very terrific portrait indeed, which has merely the disadvantage of being altogether unlike the original, or any other man known to sober history. This, by the way, is a disadvantage pretty common to Macaulay's portraits, which are not developed organically like Carlyle's, but put together in mosaic work, and on glass for the love of brilliancy; he having a fine eye for the dazzle and contrast of colours, if none for their temperance and harmony. He diligently gathers all the pieces required for his purpose,

shows them to us one by one, and announces triumphantly: All the materials are here, as you see for yourselves, gentlemen, each duly numbered and authenticated; and we expect to behold a likeness, though a glaring and composite one. But at the last moment he puts them in the kaleidoscope (or kakeidoscope) of his idiosyncrasy, gives some rapid twirls and flourishes, and no mortal can guess what strange shape they shall have taken when finally settled for exhibition. In contemplating, not without bewilderment, his portrait of Swift, one cannot help muttering: This is really very fine in the way of the dreadful, my rhetorical lord; but if we could only have, to hang beside it, Swift's portrait of *you!*

Though, his parents being thoroughly English, Swift was in no sense Irish save by accident of birth-place and the mockery of fortune which banished him to Ireland for the last thirty years of his life, the warm-hearted Irish have never ceased to love and revere the memory of the Dean, who was not only a model of sagacious private charity, but who championed the cause of their then oppressed and outraged country with a courage and constancy equalled by few, with a power and effect equalled by none, for no one else has approached him in massiveness and energy of genius. The English generally, like Dr. Johnson, have done him no kind of justice because of too little liking for him. It is doubtful whether they even read him. The children, of course, delight in the fabulous marvels of *Gulliver*, but the grown-up people care not to study its lessons. At first I was tempted to blame Mr. Forster for occupying space in a book like this, not intended for the uneducated vulgar, with accounts of such classics as the *Battle of the Books* and the *Tale of a Tub*. But on reflection it seemed highly probable that Mr. Forster was much better acquainted than myself with the public of

Mudie and Smith, and that the information he furnished was accurately gauged to their ignorance. It is queer to think of our so-called educated classes needing formal introductions to these works, and then read how a gardener's lad of eleven, trudging in blue smock frock, with red garters tied under his knees, from Farnham to Kew, spent his last threepence at Richmond on the *Tale of a Tub*, and records: "It delighted me beyond description, and produced what I have always considered a sort of birth of intellect. I read on until it was dark without any thought of supper or bed." He slept where he had been reading, in a field by a haystack, and goes on to say of his wonderful threepenny book: "I carried it about with me wherever I went, and when I—at about twenty years old—lost it in a box that fell overboard in the Bay of Fundy in North America, the loss gave me greater pain than I have since felt at losing thousands of pounds." But this rustic was WILLIAM COBBETT, the only man since Swift who has known how to write in prose for the masses with something of the same irresistible directness and vigour.

Too strong and terrible for Thackeray and Macaulay, Swift is much more so for the average middle-class John Bull, who, while among the bravest of the brave in many respects, is one of the most timorous of mortals face to face with disagreeable truths, truths that perturb his eupeptic comfort, truths hostile to his easy old-fashioned way of thinking without thought, especially if these truths affront his fat inertia in religious, moral, or social questions.*

* Elsewhere I had written on the same occasion: "To our mind, for sheer strength and veracity of intellect, Swift is unsurpassed, and scarcely equalled, in the whole range of English writers, rich as the greatest of these are in energy and sincerity. He was much too strong and veracious even for such men as Johnson, Macaulay, and Thackeray; Scott alone of his biographers was genial and large-minded enough to appreciate him, and Scott had not the time to hunt out and sift the necessary documents. As for the

This middle-class John Bull, well-fed, well-clothed, well-housed, with a snug balance at his banker's, is the most self-satisfied of optimists, and is simply disgusted and alarmed by a fellow, who as a Dean ought surely to have been contented and sleekly jolly, who never omitted when his birthday came round to read the words of Job: "Let the day perish wherein I was born, and the night in which it was said, There is a man child conceived;" who asked a friend, "Do not the corruptions and villanies of men eat your flesh and exhaust your spirits?" and who wrote of himself in his epitaph: "*Ubi sæva indignatio ulterius cor lacerare nequit.*"

general English public, with its soft-hearted and soft-headed sentimental optimism, a genius of such stern and unblenching insight is damned at once and for ever by being denounced as a cynic. It loves to blubber till tear-dry over its Dickens and Farjeon."—*Cope's Tobacco Plant*, April 1876.

A NOTE ON GEORGE MEREDITH.

(*ON THE OCCASION OF "BEAUCHAMP'S CAREER."*)

MAY 1876.

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GEORGE MEREDITH stands among our living novelists much as ROBERT BROWNING until of late years stood among our living poets, quite unappreciated by the general public, ranked with the very highest by a select few. One exception must be made to this comparison, an exception decidedly in favour of the novelists and novel-readers; for whereas Tennyson, the public's greatest poet, is immeasurably inferior to Browning in depth and scope and power and subtlety of intellect, George Eliot, the public's greatest novelist, is equal in all these qualities, save, I think, the last, to her unplaced rival, while having the advantage in some deservedly popular qualities, and the clear disadvantage in but one, the faculty of conceiving and describing vigorous or agonistic action,—in the fateful crises her leading characters are apt to merely drift. The thoughtful few have succeeded in so far imposing their judgment of Browning upon the thoughtless many, that these and their periodical organs now treat him with great respect, and try hard to assume the appearance of understanding and enjoying him, though doubtless their awkward admiration

is more genuine in the old sense of wonder or astonishment than in the modern of esteem or love. But the thoughtful few are still far from succeeding to this extent in the case of George Meredith. Even literary men are unfamiliar with him. For having in some freak of fun or irony specified only two of his other books, and these among the earliest, on his title-page; leaving etcs. to represent *Farina*, *Evan Harrington*, *Rhoda Fleming*, *the Adventures of Harry Richmond*, *Modern Love and other Poems*, with his great masterpieces, *Emilia in England*, and its sequel *Vittoria;* he has reaped the satisfaction of learning that many of his well-informed reviewers manifestly know nothing of these obscure writings. For the rest, the causes of his unpopularity are obvious enough, and he himself, as he more than once lets us know, is thoroughly aware of them. Thus he interjects in the present work (III. 218–9):—

"We will make no mystery about it. I would I could. Those happy tales of mystery are as much my envy as the popular narratives of the deeds of bread and cheese people, for they both create a tide way in the attentive mind; the mysterious pricking our credulous flesh to creep, the familiar urging our obese imagination to continual exercise. And oh, the refreshment there is in dealing with characters either contemptibly beneath us or supernaturally above! My way is like a Rhone island in the summer drought, stony, unattractive and difficult between the two forceful streams of the unreal and the over-real, which delight mankind—honour to the conjurors! My people conquer nothing, win none; *they are actual, yet uncommon. It is the clockwork of the brain that they are directed to set in motion, and—poor troop of actors to vacant benches!—the conscience residing in thoughtfulness which they would appeal to;* and if you are there impervious to them, we are lost: back I go to my wilderness, where, as you perceive, I have

contracted the habit of listening to my own voice more than is good."

Not only does he appeal to the conscience residing in thoughtfulness; he makes heavy and frequent demands on the active imagination,—monstrous attempts at extortion which both the languid and the sentimental novel-reader bitterly resent, and which indeed if they grew common with authors (luckily there is not the slightest fear of that!) would soon plunge the circulating libraries into bankruptcy. The late Charles Dickens, who coincided at all points with the vulgar taste as exactly as the two triangles of the fourth proposition of the first book of *Euclid* with one another, carried to perfection the Low-Dutch or exhaustive style of description, which may be termed artistic painting reduced to artful padding; minutely cataloguing all the details, with some exaggeration or distortion, humorous or pathetic, of each to make them more memorable; so that every item can be checked and verified as in an auctioneer's inventory, which is satisfactory to a business-like people. George Eliot with incomparably higher art paints rich and solid pictures that fill the eye and dwell in the mind. But George Meredith seldom does this, either in the realm of Nature or in that of Humanity, though the achievement is well within his power, as none of our readers can doubt who studied, being fit to study, those magnificent selections from his "Vittoria" in the *Secularist* (No. 10, March 4), entitled *Portrait of Mazzini* and *Mazzini and Italy*. He loves to suggest by flying touches rather than slowly elaborate. To those who are quick to follow his suggestions he gives in a few winged words the very spirit of a scene, the inmost secret of a mood or passion, as no other living writer I am acquainted with can. His name and various passages in his works reveal Welsh blood, more swift and fiery and imaginative than the English. And he

says in the *Emilia*, with fair pride of race: "All subtle feelings are discerned by Welsh eyes when untroubled by any mental agitation. Brother and sister were Welsh, and I may observe that there is human nature and Welsh nature." If his personages are not portrayed at full length, they are clear and living in his mind's eye, as we discern by the exquisitely appropriate gesture or attitude or look in vivid moments: and they are characterised by an image or a phrase, as when we are told that the profile of Beauchamp "suggested an arrow-head in the up-flight;" and of Renée: "her features had the soft irregularities which run to rarities of beauty, as the ripple rocks the light; mouth, eyes, brows, nostrils, and bloomy cheeks played into one another liquidly; thought flew, tongue followed, and the flash of meaning quivered over them like night-lightning. Or oftener, to speak truth, tongue flew, thought followed: her age was but newly seventeen, and she was French." And as with the outward so with the interior nature of his personages. Marvellous flashes of insight reveal some of their profoundest secrets, detect the mainsprings and trace the movements of their most complex workings, and from such data you must complete the characters, as from certain leading points a mathematician defines a curve. So with his conversations. The speeches do not follow one another mechanically adjusted like a smooth pavement for easy walking: they leap and break, resilient and resurgent, like running foam-crested sea-waves, impelled and repelled and crossed by under-currents and great tides and broad breezes; in their restless agitations you must divine the immense life abounding beneath and around and above them; and the Mudie novice accustomed to saunter the level pavements, finds that the heaving and falling are sea-sickness to a queasy stomach. Moreover he delights in the elaborate analysis

of abstruse problems, whose solutions when reached are scarcely less difficult to ordinary apprehension than are the problems themselves; discriminating countless shades where the common eye sees but one gloom or glare, pursuing countless distinct movements where the common eye sees only a whirling perplexity. As if all these heavy disqualifications were not enough, as if he were not sufficiently offensive in being original, he dares also to be wayward and wilful, not theatrically or overweeningly like Charles Reade, but freakishly and humoristically, to the open-eyed disgust of our prim public. Lastly, his plots are too carelessly spun to catch our summer flies, showing here great gaps and there a pendent entanglement; while his catastrophes are wont to outrage that most facile justice of romance which condemns all rogues to poverty and wretchedness, and rewards the virtuous with wealth and long life and flourishing large families.

In exposing his defects for the many, I have discovered some of his finest qualities for the thoughtful and imaginative few, and need now only summarise. He has a wonderful eye for form and colour, especially the latter; a wonderful ear for music and all sounds; a masterly perception of character, a most subtle sense for spiritual mysteries. His dialogue is full of life and reality, flexile and rich in the genuine unexpected, marked with the keenest distinctions, more like the bright-witted French than the slow and clumsy English. He can use brogue and *baragouinage* with rare accuracy and humorous effect; witness the Irish Mrs. Chump and the Greek Pericles in *Emilia*. Though he seldom gives way to it, he is great in the fiery record of fiery action; thus the duel in the Stelvio Pass, in *Vittoria*, has been scarcely equalled by any living novelist save by Charles Reade in that heroic fight with the pirates in *Hard Cash*. He has this sure mark of lofty

genius, that he always rises with his theme, growing more strenuous, more self-contained, more magistral, as the demands on his thought and imagination increase. His style is very various and flexible, flowing freely in whatever measures the subject and the mood may dictate. At its best it is so beautiful in simplest Saxon, so majestic in rhythm, so noble with noble imagery, so pregnant with meaning, so vital and intense, that it must be ranked among the supreme achievements of our literature. A dear friend said well when reading *Vittoria*: Here truly are words that if you pricked them would bleed. For integral grandeur and originality of conception, and for perfectness of execution, the heroine of his *Emilia* appears to me the sovereign character of our modern fiction: in her he has discovered a new great nature, whom he has endowed with a new great language. In fine, I am aware of no other living English writer so gloriously gifted and so little known and appreciated except GARTH WILKINSON: and Garth Wilkinson has squandered his superb genius in most futile efforts to cultivate the spectral Sahara of Swedenborgianism, and, infinitely worse, the Will-o'-the-wisp Slough of Despond of Spiritism; while George Meredith has constantly devoted himself to the ever-fruitful fields of real living Nature and Human Nature.*

* Elsewhere I have written, on the occasion of the one volume edition of "Richard Feverel":—"He may be termed, accurately enough for a brief indication, the Robert Browning of our novelists; and his day is bound to come, as Browning's at length has come. The flaccid and feeble folk, who want literature and art that can be inhaled as idly as the perfume of a flower, must naturally shrink from two such earnestly strenuous spirits, swifter than eagles, stronger than lions, in whom, to use the magnificent and true language of Coleridge concerning Shakspeare, 'The intellectual power and the creative energy wrestle as in a war-embrace.' But men who have lived and observed and pondered, who love intellect and genius and genuine passion, who have eyes and ears ever open to the mysterious miracles of nature and art, who flinch not from keenest

insight into the world and life, who are wont to probe and analyse with patient subtlety the intricate social and personal problems of our complex quasi-civilisation, who look not to mere plot as the be-all and end-all of a novel reflecting human character and life, who willingly dispense with the childish sugar-plums of so-called poetical justice which they never find dispensed in the grown-up work-o'-day world, who can respond with thought to thought, and passion to passion, and imagination to imagination; and, lastly, who can appreciate a style vital and plastic as the ever-evolving living world it depicts, equal to all emergencies, which can revel with clowns and fence with fine ladies and gentlemen, yet rise to all grandeurs of Nature and Destiny and the human soul in fieriest passion and action: such men, who cannot abound anywhere, but who should be less rare among meditative smokers than in the rest of the community, will find a royal treasure-house of delight and instruction and suggestion in the works of George Meredith."—*Cope's Tobacco Plant*, May 1879.

ON THE WORTH OF METAPHYSICAL SYSTEMS.

May 1876.

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A FRIVOLOUS poet observes: "If it is hard to refrain from flippancy when writing mere prose, it is almost impossible when the subject is that broad burlesque, a system of philosophy or theology. Yet we are in general so imposed upon by weight of character and intellect as to regard such a system with serious respect if not adoration. Any despotic absolutism always finds abundant slavishness among men to respond to it, just as the rich always find parasites, mad prophets always daft believers, knaves always natural dupes."

In preaching a short sermon on this flippant text, let me begin by remarking that I throughout adhere to the sense in which the word system seems to be used by the said frivolous poet; meaning a system general and absolute, whether in philosophy or theology; a system which professes to expound the universe in its genesis or its eternity, its development, its final causes or want of the same, its essential relations to the human soul (whose essence is equally expounded), its essential relations to God if the system includes a God (when his essence is indicated if not expounded). Such a system is included in each of the great

religions, and in nearly every great philosophy; the latest systems of the latter, those of the great Germans, Kant, Fichte, Schelling, Hegel, Schopenhauer, being among the most elaborate and absolute ever constructed. There are other systems, rightly called philosophical, of a very different kind, being founded on experience not intuition, following Nature instead of trying to transcend her, consciously limited amidst the Illimitable. There is nothing metaphysical in the greater part of what is called the Idealism of Berkeley; the metaphysic comes when he brings in the Eternal and Infinite Mind to give permanence to the ideal world. There is nothing metaphysical in Kant's demonstration that time and space are but constant forms of our sensibility; the metaphysic comes in when beyond the phenomena of our perceptions he predicates noumena or things in themselves of which we know nothing. There is nothing metaphysical (save by lapse or oversight) in the great modern psychological systems, for these continually appeal to the test of experience, and are in general but working theories more or less comprehensive, always open to modification by new discoveries and to inclusion in wider formulas. And here we have the essential difference between the natural and the extra-natural or supernatural, between the relative and the absolute systems; the former as empirical are ever open to improvement and susceptible of transformations, the latter as imperious and unconditional cannot suffer change without being destroyed. Hence the former are continually advancing and extending, the latter are still where they commenced; the former have established much that is practically certain in their limits, the latter in their deepest depths are each and all as uncertain as ever.

What, then, is the worth of these absolute systems which have fascinated some of the profoundest intellects and

noblest spirits among mankind? The fascination itself is not to be wondered at, for no fascination can be stronger to such intellects and such spirits than the hope of securing certitude beneath the transitory and illusive shows of this world and life. So intense, indeed, is this fascination that it has bewitched exceedingly able and good men, who despaired of attaining such certitude by rational inquiry, into abjuring their reason, strangling their doubts, and seeking peace in blind faith and abject submission to authority, mutilating their minds as Origen mutilated his body, as in the deplorable instance of J. H. Newman. But the builders of systems do not, or will not, despair. The subtlest of them recognise quite clearly the practical trustworthiness of what the natural or relative sciences have established within their limits; but they cannot endure the utter blank immeasurable beyond those strait limits, the formless void unfathomable beneath their thin surface. They see plainly what many of the triumphant and triumphing natural philosophers do not see at all, that even the most obvious and commonplace so-called facts are undermined by deepest metaphysical doubts. Admitting the relative truth, they must seek the absolute basis; acknowledging the limited fact, they hunger for the universal law. They will build out of pure thought a faithful counterpart of the world, a microcosm the perfect image of the macrocosm; believing that the laws and processes of the human mind correspond with those of the universe. With gigantic self-sufficiency each labours at his task, in no wise daunted by the manifold and manifest failures of all who have hitherto made the same attempt, in no wise doubting that his mind is a true mirror of the world, though he sees that its reflections are more or less different from those of all other minds. Century after century, sometimes generation after generation, sees the selfsame attempt renewed, the building of a tower whose top shall

reach unto heaven. When such a tower has been reared, many of the bystanders believe that its top *does* reach to heaven, for it is generally lost in the clouds, and, as Carlyle observes, what we cannot see over is infinite to us. But as men are removed from it in time, they perceive that its summit gradually sinks beneath the horizon, and they who visit it perceive that the structure announced everlasting is mouldering away and falling to ruin like the vulgarest building man erects for his sojourn. Then a new architect sets to work with the same sublime aspirations, the same indomitable self-sufficiency; a fresh metaphysical tower with a brand-new terminology loses its head in the clouds, to be regarded with awe and reverence by its bystanders, to crumble away and fall to ruin in its turn; for the legend of Babel and the confusion of tongues is the legend of system-building in all ages.

And now that we have seen in history so many such systems arise and disappear, all with the same assurance of plan, all with the same instability of structure, it is natural that we should ask the question I have put, What is their worth? To myself it appears that as systems their worth is, and always has been, little or nothing. The building and study of them has had a great educational worth in developing powers and skill which could scarcely have been called forth in their utmost energy by a hope less immense and sublime; and the study of them may be of great educational worth still. But examining any one of the great systems as a system, we seem to discern that its value consisted altogether in the value of some great thoughts or noble sentiments embodied in it, and that these were not improved but injured by the incorporation. When the structure into which they were built is a ruin, they remain as precious marbles, goodly for use in edifices less vast but less imperfect, more humble but more habitable; only to suit

them to his purpose the ancient builder hacked and chipped them into forms inconvenient for anything else, and perchance kept them obscure for ages in sombre crypt or lofty dome. A man discovering some new truth or some new aspect of an old one, will probably only strain and distort it in trying to expand it into a complete system. For to him such truths are not as splendid jewels which he may cut and polish, and set in star or cross or circlet, as his taste may prefer; this is the work of the poet; the philosopher undertakes to cut and set them in the sole best form and order, harmonious with the form and order of sun and moon and stars, and failing in this he damages them for other use. Or, to vary the illustration, if from the depths of a forest we glimpse a fragment of the remote horizon, and mentally complete the circle in accordance with that arc, our ring will not even be the ring of the meeting of earth and sky encompassing our standpoint; ours will be all shipless sea or green valley-bottom, while the true horizon would be sea and shore, vale and river, wood and hill, abounding with various life.

But it is strange that we have to appeal to history to show the worthlessness of absolute systems. How can man, an infinitesimal atom in the infinite universe, embrace that infinity? How can man, whose life is an inappreciable moment in eternal time, comprehend the laws of that eternity? A critic may be very small, and a philosopher or theologian very great (according to our petty human standards), yet the former in relation to the latter must be immeasurably greater than the latter in relation to the universe he has the audacity to expound. Therefore even the most stupid of men is quite justified in rejecting decisively and without examination any universal system whether of theology or philosophy, for beyond doubt it is ludicrously inadequate. During many millenniums some of the best

and wisest of our race have devoted themselves to teaching us all about God and our immortal souls, the origin and final causes of the world, and so forth; yet when one comes to reflect on the matter it is overwhelmingly certain that not one of these men has ever really known anything about any of these things, or whether they really exist or not. By studying the signs of the times and commonly recurring sequences, men may learn how (with due adroitness and agility) to pick up a living for their microscopical selves in this shoreless and fathomless ocean of being, of whose main currents they are perforce perfectly ignorant. Let us imagine a small colony of mice in a great cathedral, getting a poor livelihood out of Communion crumbs and taper-droppings. Could any of them by much deep speculation comprehend the origin, the plan, the purpose of the cathedral, the meaning of the altar, the significance of the ritual, the clashing of the bells, the ringing of the chants, the thunderous trepidations of the organ? Yet a mouse explaining the final causes of all these things would be incomparably less absurd than is a divine or sage expounding the mysteries of Nature or God. The discreeter mice would limit themselves to noticing and remembering that certain periods and ceremonies were marked by more numerous tapers burning, whence came more grease on the floor, and by noting the spots where grease did more abound. These would be the practical philosophers among the mice, positivists or utilitarians; and if while grease was to be had, other mice lost their time in demonstrating that the final cause of a great Church festival was to increase the harvest of taper-droppings for their species, these shrewder mice would not stay to dispute the point with them, but would be off to their jolly feast of Candlemas.

I have said that the absolute systems have fascinated some of the profoundest intellects and noblest spirits among

mankind. On the other hand, they have equally repelled intellects not less profound and spirits not less noble. And these, it must be added, have been more sane than those, for there is always more or less of insanity in the fascination. As I have elsewhere had occasion to express it, such a creed or system is a little strait-waistcoat wrought by some little man, and in which he would fain confine Titanic Nature: she laughs with immense good-nature at the puny fellow at first, but if he seriously persists in attempting to force it on her, she inevitably makes him fit for a strait-waistcoat himself.

A FEW WORDS ON THE SYSTEM OF SPINOZA.

June 1876.

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Having recently hazarded some remarks *On the Worth of Metaphysical Systems*, I proceed to illustrate my general thesis by the example of a particular system, choosing for this purpose the most profound, the most rigorously enunciated, and the most influential of all modern philosophies, that of Spinoza as expounded in his *Ethics*. I term it the most influential, not only because all the great German positive systems (Kant's important work was critical) have been really based upon it, but also because of the power with which it has wrought on great minds otherwise disaffected to metaphysics. Lessing, Göthe, and Heine are leading and well-known instances of the latter mode of influence; while of the former there is a remarkable testimony quoted from Hegel's *History of Philosophy*: "Thought must absolutely raise itself to the level of Spinozism ere mounting yet higher. Would you be philosophers? commence by being Spinozists, else you can accomplish nothing. We must first of all bathe ourselves in the sublime ether of the unique, universal, and impersonal Substance, wherein the soul purifies itself from all particularity and rejects all that it

has heretofore believed true, all—absolutely all. We must have arrived at this negation, which is the enfranchisement of the spirit." Even in England the influence of Spinoza among men of thought is much greater than is commonly avowed or supposed; and his leading terms have been so far popularised by Mr. Lewes, that the most shallow of sciolists can set himself up as a philosopher with no more stock-in-trade than perpetual glib and senseless gabble about the one Substance and its attributes and modes, while evidently without even the dimmest idea of the real meanings and relations of these terms as used by Spinoza.

No one unprejudiced can have studied the life of Spinoza, as told by the good-hearted, narrow-minded Lutheran minister, Colerus, and sketched by the free-thinking doctor, Lucas, without reverencing the man, so brave, so simple, so disinterested. No one impartial and capable can have studied the *Ethics* without reverence for his intellect, so subtle, so profound, so patient, so sincere. Under the solemn twofold fascination of his character and his genius, it is not easy to urge the callous question, What is the sheer worth of his system as a system? Yet in order to honest appraisal this question must be urged, and he of all men would have desired that it should be urged persistently and thoroughly. I am not about to be guilty of the presumption of pretending in a brief article to review a philosophy revolved and elaborated during twenty years of a secluded life, "which was a long idea," by one of the subtlest of men; I merely try to examine its foundation. The system fronts us, a master-work of metaphysical construction and cohesion in itself. Acute critics have scrutinised and tested it throughout, and have been constrained to admit that they could find no flaw of structure, no unsoundness of material, in the edifice from basement to roof. But does it truly correspond in plan and elevation

with the living world? Is it really the universe in miniature and essence, a veritable microcosm, as the master-builder undoubtedly believed? And are its foundations solid and stable, or is it but a castle in the air? These are questions for whose answers we must look beyond the building itself.

Let us first see what is the Substance which forms his world. In Definition 6. of Part I. we read in the version of Mr. Lewes: "By God I understand the Being absolutely infinite, *i.e.*, the Substance consisting of infinite Attributes, each of which expresses an infinite and eternal essence." Here the rendering of M. Émile Saisset seems more exact: "By God I understand a being absolutely infinite, *i.e.*, a substance consisting of *an infinitude of attributes*, of which each expresses an eternal and infinite essence." The eleventh Proposition declares that this God exists necessarily; and the fourteenth that no other Substance than God can exist or be conceived. In the Introduction to Part IV. we find the significant words: "This eternal and infinite Being that we call God or Nature." Now, surely this Substance is a purely metaphysical or subjective conception, of whose objective reality we have not the shadow of a proof. We know something of perceptions which we call matter; we know something of thought and extension, which in Part II., Propositions 1 and 2, are declared to be two of the infinite attributes of this unique absolutely infinite Substance; but we know nothing at all of the rest of the infinitude of infinite attributes, and it is just as presumptuous and unprofitable to affirm them as to deny them. And as this Substance is merely conceptional, so its expansion into the infinity of infinite series of modes, "the infinity of things infinitely modified," which by Part I., Proposition 16, must flow from the necessity of the divine nature, is purely logical or formal, and we have no ground at all for believing that it runs parallel with the actual develop-

ment of the real world. In making this assertion, and challenging any proof to the contrary, I am not overlooking such demonstrations as that of Proposition 7, Part II., "The order and connexion of ideas is the same as the order and connexion of things;" and its Corollary: "All that follows objectively from the infinite nature of God, follows subjectively from the idea of God in the same order and with the same connexion." I simply contend that, however true this may be in the system, and subject to its definitions, there is a complete lack of demonstration and even of presumptive evidence that it is true beyond the system in the universe of life. If this fundamental objection cannot be overcome, and I am unable to conceive how it can be overcome, the whole system as a system falls to the ground, it is a baseless castle in the air, a speculative figment, a matter of blind faith as certainly as any grossest superstition. And therefore until this objection is removed, or, to express it more appropriately, until this fathomless abyss between logic and the mysteries of life is filled up, it is needless to search out and adduce any other. With regard, however, to the genesis and expansion of the series of modes, I must refer to an important passage in one of the most important sections of the *Ethics*, the Appendix to Part I.: "It results from Propositions 21, 22, and 23, that the most perfect effect is that which is produced immediately by God, and that an effect becomes more and more imperfect in proportion as its production involves a greater number of intermediate causes." Not only is this doctrine of emanation purely metaphysical, and as such without probable correspondence in the development of Nature, and indeed in direct antagonism to what we know of that development; it is also, if I understand aright, irreconcilable with the root-ideas of Spinozism itself, the absolute unity of the infinite Substance, and the identity of reality

and perfection. If All is the manifestation of one divine Substance, the necessary production of one divine energy, how can intermediate causes intervene, and how can deterioration be possible? It is but fair to add that the argument founded on this passage might be omitted without weakening the confutation of the doctrine of final causes; but it must also be remarked that this doctrine of emanation infects the subsequent parts, so that we have evil and imperfection resulting from infinite and eternal perfection, a contradiction even more glaring than in the Christian scheme, where the fictions of creation and free-will shroud it in comparative obscurity.

But assuredly if I must consider the system, as a system, a failure, though so stupendous an achievement of human genius and audacity, I do not consider Spinoza's life-work wasted. In the former article I said: "But examining any one of the great systems as a system, we seem to discern that its value consisted altogether in the value of some great thoughts or noble sentiments embodied in it, and that these were not improved but injured by the incorporation." And in such great thoughts and noble sentiments the system of Spinoza abounds perhaps more than any other that has been erected in Christendom. Let us look through the *Ethics*, choosing such as lend themselves to short quotation, and reading them liberally, not as those in bondage to the system and the letter, but as minds open to the spirit and free truth, which live and endure while the fashions of dogma and expression are ever changing. And first let us recognise the sublimity of his intense, constant, dominating conception of the unity of Substance, apart from the metaphysical attributes, of which we can know nothing, wherewith he invested it; a conception that in no narrow sense amply merits the high eulogy of Hegel already quoted. In my extracts I follow the French version of Émile

Saisset, Mr. Lewes having translated only the opening of Part I.

"This eternal and infinite Being that we call God or Nature acts as it exists with an equal necessity. The necessity that makes it exist is the same that makes it act."—Introduction, Part IV.

"Neither intelligence nor volition belongs to the nature of God."—Part I., Proposition 17, Scholium.

"There is nothing contingent in the nature of things; all things on the contrary are determined by the necessity of the Divine nature to exist and to act in a certain manner."—I., 29.

"The will cannot be termed a free cause, but only a necessary or constrained cause. God does not act in virtue of a free will."—I., 32, and Corollary.

"Nature proposes to herself no aim in her operations, and all final causes are nothing but pure fictions imagined by men."—I., Appendix.

"And thus they cease not to demand of you the cause of the cause, until you take refuge in the will of God, that is to say, in the asylum of ignorance."—*Ibid.*

"For the perfection of things must be measured solely by their own nature and power, and things are neither more nor less perfect because they attract or repel the desires of man, because they are useful or hurtful to the nature of man."—*Ibid.*

"Reality and perfection are to me the same thing."—II., Definition 6.

"Thought is an attribute of God; in other words, God is a thinking existence. Extension is an attribute of God; in other words, God is an extended existence. The thinking substance and the extended substance are one and the same substance, which is conceived now under one of its attributes, and now under the other."—II., 1, 2, and 7, Scholium.

"The human soul is a part of the infinite mind of God.' —II., 11, Corollary.

"All Nature is one sole individual, of which the parts, *i.e.* all bodies, vary in an infinitude of manners without the individual itself, in its totality, undergoing any change."—II., 13, Lemma 7, Scholium.

"Men deceive themselves in this, that they think themselves free. Now, in what consists such an opinion? Solely in this, that they are conscious of their actions, and ignore the causes that determine them. The idea that men have of their liberty comes, then, from this, that they know not the cause of their actions, for to say that these depend on the will is to use words to which no meaning is attached." —II., 35, Scholium.

"When one reads most of the philosophers who have discussed the passions and the conduct of mankind, one would say that with them it has not been a question of natural things, regulated by the general laws of the world, but of things placed beyond the domain of Nature. They seem to consider man in Nature as an empire within another empire. According to them man disturbs the order of the universe much more than he makes part of it; he has an absolute power over his actions, and his determinations depend upon himself alone."—III., Introduction.

"As I think, nothing occurs in the universe that can be attributed to a fault of Nature. For Nature is always the same; everywhere she is one, everywhere she has the same virtue and the same power; in other words, the laws and rules of Nature, according to which all things are produced and transformed, are everywhere and always the same, and consequently we ought to explain all things whatsoever by one sole and same method, I mean by the universal laws of Nature."—*Ibid.*

"Joy is the passage from a less to a greater perfection.

Sorrow is the passage from a greater to a less perfection." —III., Appendix; Definitions 2 and 3.

"Good and evil mark nothing positive in things considered in themselves, and are nothing but fashions of thinking, or notions that we form by comparison of things. In fact one and the same thing may be at the same time good and bad, and even indifferent."—IV., Introduction.

"The supreme good of the soul is knowledge of God; and the supreme virtue of the soul is to know God."—IV., Proposition 28.

"Humility is not a virtue; in other words, it does not spring from reason."—IV., 53.

"Repentance is not a virtue, or in other words, it does not spring from reason; on the contrary, he who repents of an action is twice miserable or impotent."—IV., 54.

"The one thing in the world of which a free man thinks the least is death, and his wisdom is not the meditation of death but of life."—IV., 67.

"He who loves God cannot try to make God love him in return."—V., 19.

"The intellectual love of the soul for God is the very love God feels for himself. . . . in other words, the intellectual love of the soul for God is a part of the infinite love of God for himself."—V., 36.

"Even if we knew not that our soul is eternal, we would not cease to consider as the first objects of life, piety, religion, in a word, all that corresponds with courage and generosity of soul. . . . We diverge here, it seems, from the vulgar opinion. For most men think that they are not free save in so far as they are permitted to obey their passions, and that they cede out of their right all that they yield to the commandments of the divine law. Piety, religion, and all the virtues that are related to energy of soul, are therefore in their view burdens from which they hope

to disencumber themselves at death, in receiving the reward of their bondage, *i.e.*, of their submission to religion and piety. And it is not only this hope that leads them; the fear of the terrible sufferings with which they are menaced in the other world is likewise a powerful motive determining them to live, in so far as their weakness and their impotent soul allow, according to the commandments of the divine law. If this hope and this fear were withdrawn from men, if these persuaded themselves that the souls perish with the bodies, and that there is not a second life for the miserable who have borne the crushing weight of piety, it is certain that they would return to their primitive character, regulating their life according to their passions, and choosing to obey fortune rather than themselves. A conduct as absurd, in my opinion, as that of a man who should fill his body with poisons and deadly food, for the fine reason that he had no hope to enjoy wholesome nourishment for all eternity, or who, seeing that the soul is not eternal or immortal, should renounce his reason, and wish to become insane; things so preposterous that they are scarcely worth mention."—V., 41, and Scholium.

"Beatitude is not the reward of virtue, it is virtue itself; and not because we restrain our evil passions do we possess it, but because we possess it we are capable of restraining our evil passions."—V., 42 (the last).

These, and such as these, are the great thoughts and noble sentiments that give such inestimable value to the system which adds no worth to them, but rather detracts from their intrinsic value. When the elaborate geometrical construction, with all its intricate framework of Definitions, Axioms, Postulates, Propositions, Corollaries, Scholiums, and Lemmas, shall be regarded as a mere curiosity, a Chinese puzzle of miraculous patience and ingenuity, these thoughts and sentiments will still be an inspiration for

earnest and sincere and meditative men. I cannot reflect without deep awe on the sustained grandeur, the divine energy of the intellect and soul which could clearly discern, persistently feel and calmly announce such doctrines in an age and clime whose noblest spirits were still, with very few exceptions, dominated by Christianity, the religion of humility, of repentance, of sorrow, of Heaven and Hell, of miracles and special Providence, of vilified Matter, of a God alien from the Universe. The sublime sentences of this most subtle Oriental genius recluse in the Occident, whose life was a long trance and ecstasy of contemplation, are as superhuman spells disclosing immense and serene horizons beyond the huddled and sordid tumult of our common life, clouded with low creeds, bounded by narrow thoughts, turbid with selfish passions.

IN OUR FOREST OF THE PAST.

January 1877.

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A MILD pleasant day after weeks of wind and rain, a clear moonlit night heralding storm and flood; the last day of the Old Year and the eve of the New. About ten the bells began ringing for the "watch-night" services, wherein the few still faithful and the many merely curious solemnise the annual death and birth with confessions and litanies and chanting. And while the air rang with the bells, I thought: I have seen so many old years die, so many new years born; but when has the new proved better than the old? and where is omen or hope that the year yet unborn shall prove better than the year now dying? Have I any tender grief for the departure? Have I any joyous welcome for the advent? Let me pass in sleep that narrowest moment of midnight wherein ere a man can cry Now! the one has given place to the other. So I lay down and slept. But though St. Sylvester rules no more, and the weird ghostly masquerades are abolished, the night which was his remains for us mortals potent with sleeping visions as with waking reveries; a night that looks back to the past and forward to the future, a night pregnant with phantasy. Wherefore though I slept, my mind was not at peace, but carried me in sad dream to a forest immense

and obscure, even the forest of the past which is dead; and it was full of moanings and wailings, vague yet more articulate than the moaning of winds or waters; and One moved beside me who was tall and stately and muffled in darkness. And when we had walked long, silent, under the thick leafage, among the massy boles, the wailings grew keener and more piteous; and we came upon an open space where was gathered a vast multitude of infants and young children, whose desolate cries and pining faces made my heart sore. And he my companion and leader murmured softly: Scarcely had they blossomed into the world of life than they withered away out of it; and for too early death they have no rest: they wail their frustrate lives. We left the poor little ones and walked on silent; and as their wailing sank, a sound of saddest moaning grew upon our ears; and in a broad glade we discerned a multitude of youths and maidens, wan or fever-flushed; all restless, though drooping with weakness and languor; and their tears were as tears of the very heart's blood, and all hope of comfort expired in their sighs. And when we had gazed long, my companion murmured: Young Love tendered them the apple of his Mother, golden and rose-red from her divine warm hand, but it turned to dust and ashes on their lips; for the bitterness of death they can never find peace: they moan their frustrate lives. We went onward through the gloom from moaning unto moaning; and beheld a multitude of men and women, halt, maimed, twisted, bent, blind, dumb, convulsed, leprous; hoarsely groaning or gesturing anguish; dreadful to hear and to see. And my guide murmured: The wine of existence was brought to them in goblets broken or leaking; for the full sweet draught they had but a scanty sip: they lament their frustrate lives. And as we walked on we heard wild shrieks and gibbering laughter; and we came to a rugged ravine,

on whose banks clustered cowering idiots, many with a large tumour at the throat, and whose floor was full of a restless multitude, haggard and dishevelled, swift and abrupt in movement, furious in gesticulation; horrible to hearing and to sight. And my companion murmured as I turned away shuddering: The wine of existence passed to them was drugged or poisoned, and they drank stupor or madness; death has no nepenthe for these whose wine of love was as a philter of hate: they curse and mock their frustrate lives. Then we crossed a space of upland heath, and I saw the stars shining, cold and supreme in the deep dark heavens, and I said to him at my side: Nature is very cruel to man. And he answered calmly: But how kind to all other creatures! and how kind is man to his brother, and to himself! Then we plunged again into the thick forest, as into a moaning midnight sea, and came upon an immense multitude, many shivering in thin rags, many nearly naked, all gaunt and haggard, with hollow eyes and famished faces; and some huddled together as for warmth, and some moved restlessly hither and thither, and in their moaning was eternal hunger. And my leader said: Rich men grew richer with their toil; kings and priests and great lords were fed fat with the flesh that fell away from their bones; they starved in body and in mind; their existence was a long need: they moan their frustrate lives. And we went forward continually from moaning unto moaning. And we came upon a multitude of whom some were chained together in long files, some were fettered or manacled singly; many nearly naked were scored livid or blood-red with the lash; others lay helpless or writhing on the ground as broken on the wheel or dislocated by the rack; others were clothed in garments of flames as ready for their own burning; others glared wildly bewildered through tangled locks as stupefied or maddened by years of the dungeon; and their

moanings were lamentable with the bitterness or sullenness of despair. And my guide said: They were imprisoned and chained and lashed for their crimes by the rich who had kept them wretched and ignorant and vile; they were dungeoned or tortured by kings because they dared try to be free; they were tortured and burned alive by priests because they dared to think for themselves: they moan their frustrate lives. And we went onward continually from moaning unto moaning. And we reached an enormous multitude, the soldiery of all nations, and many were mangled and mutilated, gashed and bleeding, torn and shattered; others lay as starving, others as in fever, others as devoured by frost; and those who seemed unhurt paced erect with a stolid misery in the forthright regard. And my leader said: They were torn from their kindred, they were cut off from the sweet life of home; for love they were given lust, for the ploughshare that produces, the sword that destroys; from men they were drilled into machines: for the pride of kings and nobles, for the enmities of priests, they went forth to kill or be killed by their fellows whom they knew not, against whom they had no cause of hatred, who had no cause of hatred against them; to ravage and burn and massacre; the cries of the homeless, the widows, the fatherless, are ever in their ears: they moan their worse than frustrate lives. And we went onward continually from moaning unto moaning. And we came to a vast multitude; cowled monks and veiled nuns moaning for ever a hopeless *Miserere;* cadaverous ascetics, self-starved, self-lashed, self-tortured, grovelling on the earth, staring spell-bound on skulls, sobbing and weeping, supplicating with desperate despairing supplications the image of a wretched human figure nailed to a cross. And my guide said: For religion they renounced the sweetness of home, the healthful brother-

hood and sisterhood of humanity, freedom and self-reliance; they renounced all the goodness and sweetness of the world, to gain the Heaven in which you see them here: they moan their frustrate lives. And we went onward continually from moaning unto moaning. And we came to a multitude, of whom some frail and languid were reclining on the earth, and others paced to and fro, while all were in profound dejection. And my guide said: Here are the dreamers who made no earnest effort to realise their dreams of goodness, or beauty, or truth; and here are the strong and strenuous minds baffled and vanquished by feeble bodies or adverse fate: they moan their frustrate lives. And we went onward continually from moaning unto moaning. And we came to an innumerable multitude of men and women, dull-eyed, bloated, sluggish, bewildered, moaning uneasily in their semi-torpor. And my guide said: Their lives were narrowed to their homes, they worshipped wealth, they cringed to the dust before rank, they aspired but to comfort and good repute, they were shut in and walled up from Nature and art and thought: they moan their frustrate lives. And we went onward continually from moaning unto moaning. And we came upon a multitude; great lords in rich furred robes, great prelates in purple and crimson; and they were drooping and broken and crushed down as if robed with lead, and coronet and mitre seemed of lead on their brain. And my guide said: They lived superb and luxurious as a race apart and above their kind; trampling on the necks of their fellows; they were fat with the insolence of unearned wealth; their choice wines were the blood of the poor, their choice meats were the flesh of those who toiled for them; they scorned and denied human brotherhood: they moan their worse than frustrate lives. And we went onward continually from moaning unto moaning. And in

the deepest depth of gloom of the forest we passed among figures each wandering alone, and they were crowned monarchs, and the crowns seemed of fire burning ever through the brain; and in the regard of each I read the anguish and despair of a horrible isolation, and each pressed his right hand to his heart as if it were bursting with agony. And my guide said: They counted themselves as gods, looking down upon their kind, contemptuous, impassible, unbeneficent; moving them hither and thither at will, sacrificing thousands to a lust or a caprice, sending them forth by myriads to slay and be slain; before them was terror, and behind them death and desolation; for their glory and their sumptuousness millions toiled in want and misery: they moan their worse than frustrate lives. Then I paused and spoke to my leader: My heart is sick and sorrowful to death with this vision of the past of my kind; have all human lives, then, been frustrate, and not any fulfilled? And he answered: Come and see. And we turned to the right and went down through the wood, leaving the moanings behind us; and we came to a broad valley through which a calm stream rippled toward the moon, now risen on our left hand large and golden in a dim emerald sky, dim with transfusion of splendour; and her light fell and overflowed a level underledge of softest yellow cloud, and filled all the valley with a luminous mist warm as mild sunshine, and quivered golden on the far river-reaches; and elsewhere above us the immense sweep of pale azure sky throbbed with golden stars; and a wonderful mystical peace as of trance and enchantment possessed all the place. And in the meadows of deep grass where the perfume of violets mingled with the magical moonlight, by the river whose slow sway and lapse might lull their repose, we found tranquil sleepers, all with a light on their faces, all with a smile on their lips. And my

leader said: Their wine was pure, and the goblet full; they drank it and were content: their day was serene,* every hour filled with work that was pleasure, or with equable pleasure itself; so when night came they lay down content: they had health and strength, they were simple, truthful and just, they were free-hearted and could give bountifully, they were free-minded and lived free, they were warm-hearted and had many friends, they loved and were beloved, they had no fear of life or death; wherefore when life was fulfilled they died content: and therefore they now sleep placidly the sleep that is eternal; and the smile upon their lips, and the light in shadow from beneath their eyelids, tell that they dream for ever some calm happy dream: they enjoy unremembering the fruit of their perfect lives. And as we lingered along the valley, side by side with the river, and the moon from above the southern wooded slope gazed down as in trance on that entranced Elysium, the thought of the sombre and baleful forest through which we had come weighed heavily upon my heart, and I said; How few are these in their quiet bliss to all the countless moaning multitudes we have seen on our way! And my companion answered: They are very few. And I sighed: Must it be always so? And he responded: Did Nature destroy all those infants? did Nature breed all those defects and deformities? did Nature bring forth all those idiocies and lunacies? or, was not rather their chief destroyer and producer the ignorance of Man outraging Nature? And the poor, the prisoners, the soldiery, the ascetics, the priests, the nobles, the kings; were these the work of Nature, or of the perversity of Man? And I asked: Were not the very ignorance and perversity of Man also from Nature?

* "A happy soul, that all the way
To Heaven rides in a summer's day."—*Crashaw.*

And he replied: Yea; yet perchance, putting himself child-like to school, he may gradually learn from Nature herself to enlighten the one and control the other.—Then the dolorous moanings again filled my ears, even in the moon-lit valley of peace; and I awoke in the moonlight and heard the moaning of the gale swelling to a storm.

THE END.

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